BROOKLYN
PUBLIC LIBRARY

EIGHT ESSAYS ON
JOAQUÍN SOROLLA Y BASTIDA

VOLUME I

BROWN
UNIVERSITY

EIGHT ESSAYS

ON

JOAQUÍN SOROLLA Y BASTIDA

BY

AURELIANO DE-BERUETE,

CAMILLE MAUCLAIR, HENRI ROCHEFORT,

LEONARD WILLIAMS, ELISABETH LUTHER CARY,

JAMES GIBBONS HUNEKER, CHRISTIAN BRINTON,

AND

WILLIAM E. B. STARKWEATHER

FOLLOWED BY

APPRECIATIONS OF THE PRESS

Printed on the occasion of the Exhibition of Paintings by Señor Sorolla at the invitation of the Hispanic Society of America, 156th Street, West of Broadway, New York City, February 4 to March 9, 1909.

VOLUME I

THE HISPANIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA

NEW YORK 1909

M 1605037

Copyright, 1909, by
The Hispanic Society
of America

BROOKLYN
PUBLIC LIBRARY

CONTENTS

VOLUME I

PAGE

Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida 9
Aureliano de Beruete

M. Sorolla y Bastida 101
Camille Mauclair

Un Astre qui se Lève 173
Henri Rochefort

The Art of Joaquín Sorolla 191
Leonard Williams

Sorolla y Bastida: One of the Great Modern Masters 329
Elisabeth Luther Cary

Sorolla y Bastida 365
James Gibbons Huneker

Sorolla at the Hispanic Society 407
Christian Brinton

VOLUME II

Joaquín Sorolla: The Man and His Work . . 7
William E. B. Starkweather

Appreciations of the Press 129

Catalogue 375

JOAQUÍN SOROLLA Y BASTIDA

POR AURELIANO DE BERUETE

(Reimpreso de La Lectura, Revista de Ciencias y de Artes, Año I, Enero, 1901. Núm. 1. Madrid: Imprenta de la Viuda é hijos de Tello.)

JOAQUÍN SOROLLA Y BASTIDA

LO PRIMERO que le ocurre al que con espíritu crítico contempla una obra de arte, después de haber gozado silenciosamente de la impresión que ésta le produce, es preguntarse cómo, cuándo, bajo qué influencia fué creada, cuál ha sido su génesis, por qué es así y no de otro modo, dada la infinita variedad de tipos á los cuales pudo subordinarse. Esta curiosidad despierta en el contemplador multitud de ideas y de recuerdos que le meuven á comparar la obra que se los ha sugerido con otras que le son familiares, las cuales de tiempo atrás se hallan estudiadas y clasificadas por la crítica.

Al encontrarnos frente á la tan rica y variada producción del artista objeto de este estudio, deseamos saber quién es este artista, el cual, joven aún, desconocido no hace mucho tiempo y discutido hasta hace poco, está hoy reputado como una de las eminencias de la pintura contemporánea. Quisiéramos, además,

definir la característica de su estilo y tendencias, cosa difícil si se trata de un pintor del pasado, casi imposible tratándose de un contemporáneo que se halla en el pleno florecimiento de sus facultades naturales.

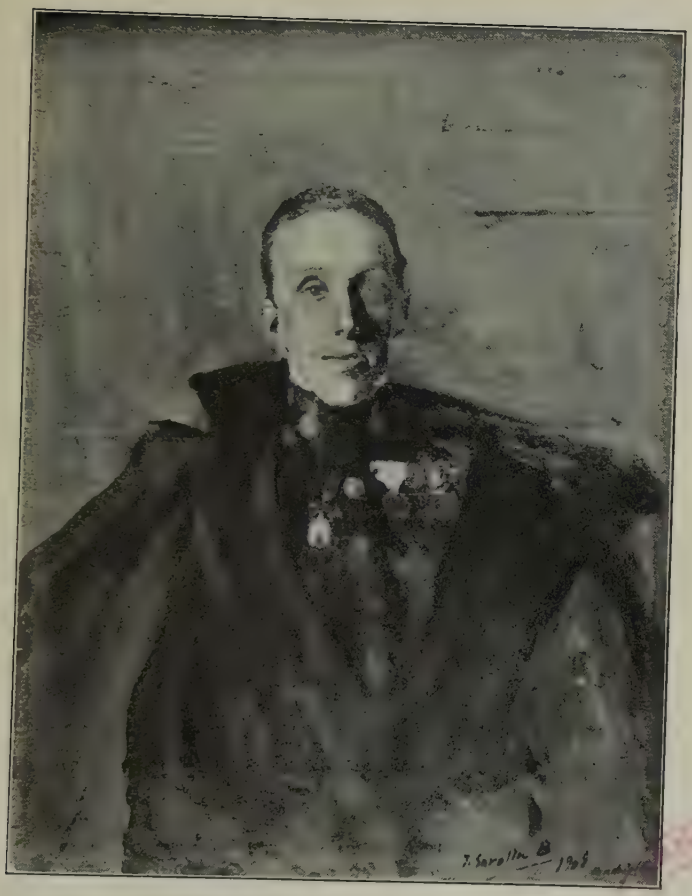
Algunos datos biográficos recogidos de labios del artista nos darán idea de sus primeros pasos en su profesión, de los maestros que le iniciaron en ésta, y también de su carácter y fisonomía moral.

Nació Joaquín Sorolla en Valencia el 27 de Febrero de 1863. Huérfano de padre y madre, á quienes perdió en breves días, cuando él contaba dos años de edad, víctimas de la invasión colérica en aquella ciudad, en 1865, fué recogido, en compañía de su hermana, por sus tíos D. José Piqueles y Doña Isabel Bastida, esposa de éste y hermana de la madre de Sorolla. A tan noble rasgo de caridad debemos la salvación de una vida preciosa para el arte, y no sería justo dejar de rendir el tributo de gratitud que merecen aquéllos, que fueron, en realidad, los padres y primeros protectores de Sorolla.

Nacido y criado en Valencia, tiene el pintor en sus venas sangre aragonesa y catalana, pues su padre era natural de Cantavieja, pueblo de la provincia de Teruel, y su madre, valenciana de nacimiento, era hija de padres catalanes.

Asistió en su infancia á la Escuela Normal de Va-

His Majesty Alfonso XIII, King of Spain



His Majesty Alfonso XIII, King of Spain

lencia, en la cual no demostró grandes aptitudes como alumno de primeras letras. En cambio, se inició su vocación para las artes de modo tan manifiesto, que uno de sus maestros, D. Baltasar Perales, Director en la actualidad de aquella Escuela, al ver que el niño, en vez de aplicarse al estudio de la gramática, se entretenía incesantemente en borrajear cuantas hojas de papel le venían á la mano, le regaló lápices y colores, y aun hizo la vista gorda respecto de la desatención del chico hacia el estudio. Libre de toda reprensión, no se ocupó desde entonces de otra cosa que de dibujar á su capricho y copiar cuantas estampas le facilitaban sus compañeros.

En vista de que el muchacho no sacaba fruto de la enseñanza de la Escuela, resolvió su tío, dueño á la sazón de un taller de cerrajero, meterlo á aprendiz de este oficio, en el cual, ayudando á los oficiales en las faenas de la fragua y de la lima, en lucha con las durezas del hierro, fué templando su cuerpo para otras faenas más duras aún que en la vida le aguardaban.

Tuvo también su tío el buen acuerdo de ayudar la vocación del muchacho, haciéndole que asistiera, las horas libres de la noche, á las clases de dibujo de la Escuela de Artesanos. En ésta, y bajo la dirección del profesor D. Cayetano Capuz, se aplicó Sorolla de tal suerte, que obtuvo el primer año todos los premios.

A la edad de quince años entró en la Escuela de Bellas Artes de San Carlos, abandonando definitivamente el taller de cerrajería, y dedicándose en cuerpo y alma, día y noche, al estudio del dibujo y de la pintura con tal aprovechamiento, que en el primer curso ganó los premios de colorido, dibujo del natural y perspectiva.

Por aquellos días conoció á D. Antonio García, el cual adivinó bien pronto las dotes del joven y le dispensó desde entonces abierta protección y amistad, concediéndole una pensión anual, que disfrutó el pintor hasta el día en que, habiendo logrado satisfacer las exigencias de la vida con el fruto de su trabajo, y asegurada en lo posible su independencia de artista, vió cumplidos los anhelos de su corazón, uniéndose en matrimonio con la hija de su protector Doña Clotilde García.

Durante los años de su educación artística en la Escuela de San Carlos de Valencia, hizo Sorolla á Madrid tres viajes: el primero, en 1881, realizado tan sólo para ver y estudiar la Exposición de Bellas Artes, en la cual presentó tres cuadros de marina, que pasaron inadvertidos, y que él borró más tarde. Al año siguiente volvió para hacer estudios en el Museo del Prado, dedicándose á copiar exclusivamente varias cabezas de los cuadros de Velázquez y Ribera. El

Her Majesty Victoria Eugenia Cristina, Queen of Spain

BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY

His Royal Highness the Prince of Asturias

IV

último lo efectuó en la primavera de 1884 para presentar en la Exposición su cuadro *El Dos de Mayo,* que acababa de pintar en Valencia, con el cual hizo su brillante aparición en el mundo del arte.

Pintado con el brío y la fogosidad de los veinte años; lleno de vida, de movimiento, de luz y color; inspirado en un hecho que conmovió las fibras del artista enamorado de lo épico y legendario, reveló por completo esta obra las cualidades raras de su autor, haciendo presentir lo que de él podía esperarse en adelante.

Tan sólo acometerlo fué clara muestra de una intuición genial, pues no creemos que hasta entonces se hubiera intentado por nadie, en España al menos, pintar directamente un cuadro con figuras de tamaño natural en pleno sol. Para realizarlo hubo de utilizar Sorolla, como taller, los corrales de la Plaza de Toros de Valencia, en donde, á fuerza de quemar pólvora y de envolver en humo á los modelos, quiso resucitar ante su vista la escena real, para trasladarla al lienzo tal y como su imaginación se la había representado.

A pesar de que en el segundo, y principalmente en los últimos términos del cuadro, donde aparece mayor el fragor del combate, no permite el humo que sean apreciados los detalles de las figuras, hizo gala el pintor de sus conocimientos del dibujo y anatomía en

las de primer término, especialmente en aquéllas que representan á los dos heróicos artilleros Daoiz y Velarde, en las cuales la expresión de su fisonomía y las actitudes de piernas y brazos le dieron ocasión de probar la maestría adquirida en la escuela de San Carlos.

El cuadro *El Dos de Mayo,* premiado con medalla de segunda clase en la Exposición de 1884, fué adquirido por el Estado y se halla hoy en el Museo Balaguer de Villanueva y Geltrú.

Regresó Sorolla á Valencia después de su primer triunfo, y no tardó en obtener otro, pues aquel mismo año de 1884 le fué otorgado el premio de la Diputación de aquella provincia en el concurso celebrado para la pensión á Roma por su cuadro *El Palleter dando el grito de la independencia,* inspirado en un hecho histórico análogo al de *El Dos de Mayo.* Tiene con éste grandes analogías por el movimiento y vida de las numerosas figuras que en él se ven representadas.

Al cumplir veintidós años, á principios de 1885, partió á Roma, en donde bien pronto conoció á aquellos artistas que formaban la brillante colonia española, Pradilla, Villegas, Sala y otros, cuyas lecciones y consejos hubieron de guiarle en el desempeño de los estudios de desnudo que como pensionado

Her Royal Highness Doña Ysabel de Borbón, Infanta of Spain

Her Royal Highness the Princess Henry of Battenberg

debía ejecutar. A estos trabajos dedicó los primeros meses del año citado, y en la primavera del mismo marchó á París en compañía de su amigo el distinguido artista D. Pedro Gil.

En esta visita á París, ante las obras expuestas en el Salón de aquel año, en la Exposición de Menzel, y especialmente en la de Bastien Lepage, abrió Sorolla sus ojos por vez primera al movimiento iniciado entonces en la pintura moderna.

Todavía, sin embargo, no se había presentado en París, en toda su pujanza, aquella pléyade de pintores escandinavos y finlandeses que tanto sorprendió al mundo en la Exposición universal de 1889, y cuyo principal mérito fué el de hacer extensivos á todos los géneros de pintura los procedimientos usados de mucho tiempo atrás por los grandes paisajistas modernos. A haberlos conocido entonces Sorolla, es seguro, dadas sus aficiones y tendencias, que se habría dejado influir por ellos, tan sinceros, tan vigorosos, tan coloristas y, sobre todo, tan independientes.

¿Quién sabe si no fué beneficioso para el desenvolvimiento de su personalidad artística el hecho de que esta influencia de los grandes pintores modernistas del Norte, no se haya dejado sentir en las obras de Sorolla sino algunos años más tarde, cuando dueño ya de reprimir su asombrosa facilidad y su facultad

creadora tan fecunda, pudo asimilarse las cualidades salientes de aquellos maestros sin detrimento de las suyas propias?

Durante los seis meses que permaneció en París trabajó de manera vertiginosa, haciendo por el día estudios serios en su taller, y tomando apuntes al lápiz de cuanto veía en la calle, en los ómnibus y en los cafés animados de los bulevares, hasta las altas horas de la noche.

Regresó á Roma, en donde volvió á respirar una atmósfera artística bien diferente de la de París, y en oposición abierta á su temperamento de pintor. A pesar de esto, la fuerza del medio ambiente le hizo abandonar la senda del realismo tan fielmente seguida por él hasta entonces; y el deseo de hacer una obra de gran tamaño y de un asunto transcendental, le llevó á emprender el cuadro *El Entierro de Cristo*.

Trabajó en éste más que en cuadro alguno. Empezó por llenar el lienzo de figuras que poco á poco fué haciendo desaparecer de él, no dejando al término de la obra sino aquéllas indispensables para caracterizar la escena representada. Por fin, tras muchas vacilaciones y cambios, hubo de darlo por terminado y lo presentó en la Exposición de Madrid de 1887, en la cual no dejó de sorprender por el contraste que ofrecía con *El Dos de Mayo* del certamen anterior.

I

Siete-Picos, Guadarrama

Covachuelas, Toledo

El Entierro de Cristo, de Sorolla, no es un cuadro vulgar. La originalidad de su composición y el tinte dramático en que se halla envuelto le hacen interesante. Pero hay que reconocer que, inspirado en un sentimiento ajeno al carácter y aptitudes de un pintor naturalista por excelencia, y con tendencias opuestas á las seguidas por éste en sus obras anteriores, constituye una excepción entre todas ellas. Y sea por esto, sea por otras causas, fué muy discutido durante la Exposición, y no obtuvo el premio que del esfuerzo que pintor de tantos alientos había empleado en el desempeño de la obra podía esperarse.

Volvió Sorolla á Italia instalándose en Asís, á cuya histórica ciudad bien pronto se aficionó, alternando sus tareas haciendo ya estudios inspirados en los maestros italianos de los siglos XIII y XIV que á su vista se ofrecían, ya otros recordando aquellas obras de Bastien Lepage que tanto le impresionaron durante su permanencia en París. Fué esta época un paréntesis en la vida del artista, un momento de descanso en aquel lugar tranquilo y solitario, que le prestó nuevos bríos para acometer las obras posteriores.

En Asís pintó el cuadro, último envío de pensionado, *El Padre Jofré amparando á un loco,* el cual se halla en el Hospital provincial de Valencia.

Es un cuadro ecléctico, hecho bajo la influencia de

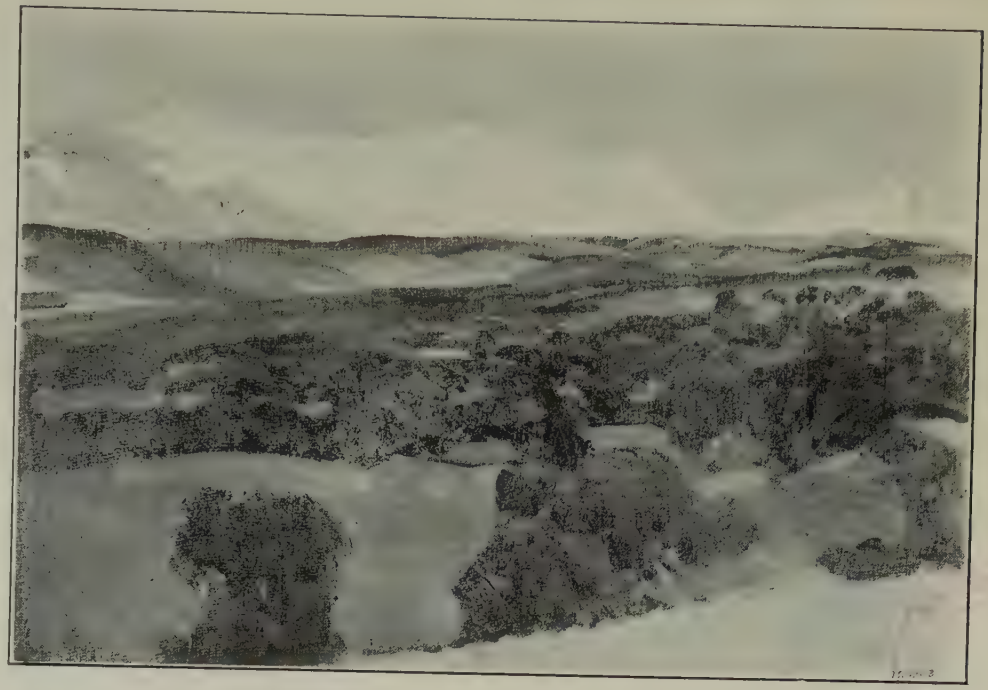
otros de diversas tendencias que le impresionaron en los estudios de Roma y en las Exposiciones de París. Lo más típico de este cuadro, lo más verdadero, lo que mejor acusa la personalidad del pintor, es la figura del protagonista, severa, real y de gran carácter. Es asimismo la que revela mayor maestría técnica.

Terminada esta obra, marchó á Valencia para llevar á efecto su matrimonio, cuya benéfica influencia en la vida íntima del artista se reflejó desde entonces en sus creaciones pictóricas.

Su joven esposa, dotada de claro entendimiento y de virtudes que la modestia hace pasar inapreciadas, levanto el ánimo decaido del pintor en los días de desaliento, templó no pocas veces la fogosidad impetuosa y la impresionabilidad de su temperamento nervioso; le auxilió, en fin, en todos los momentos difíciles tan frecuentes en la vida de un artista que lucha tenazmente en pos de un ideal que jamás se alcanza.

Como muestra de la producción de Sorolla desde su viaje á Italia, á principios de 1885, y de lo mucho que pintó en París en este mismo año, pueden citarse las obras presentadas por él en Madrid, en la Exposición de 1890, las cuales, con ser tantas y tan variadas, no reflejan, á decir verdad, la genuína personalidad del artista.

La principal de ellas, el cuadro *Boulevard de París,*



3

Las Pedrizas, Pardo

fué una concesión, quizá inconsciente, á las exigencias de la época de su primer viaje á París, así como *El Entierro de Cristo* lo había sido al medio ambiente de Roma y Asís, á cuyas influencias no pudo sustraerse por no tener entonces el artista plena conciencia del alcance de sus dones naturales y del camino que debía seguir para el desarrollo adecuado de éstos.

Representa aquel cuadro el exterior de uno de los cafés de los bulevares, con las mesas ocupadas por personas de uno y otro sexo que entretienen sus ocios viendo pasar la multitud que á toda hora transcurre por aquellos sitios. Está iluminado por la luz tibia del anochecer, contrastando con las luces encendidas del interior del café.

La habilidad técnica de la obra y la conclusión esmerada de todos sus pormenores, habrían sido bastante para acreditar á un pintor; pero, tratándose de aquél que había inaugurado su carrera con cuadros que revelaban mayores bríos, no logró satisfacer las esperanzas concebidas de obras más vigorosas y personales que ésta.

Entre los diversos estudios que presentó al mismo tiempo, deben ser citados algunos inspirados en obras de Bastien Lepage, y muy especialmente el de una joven parisiense.

Durante los años 1889 á 1892 pintó, ya en Valen-

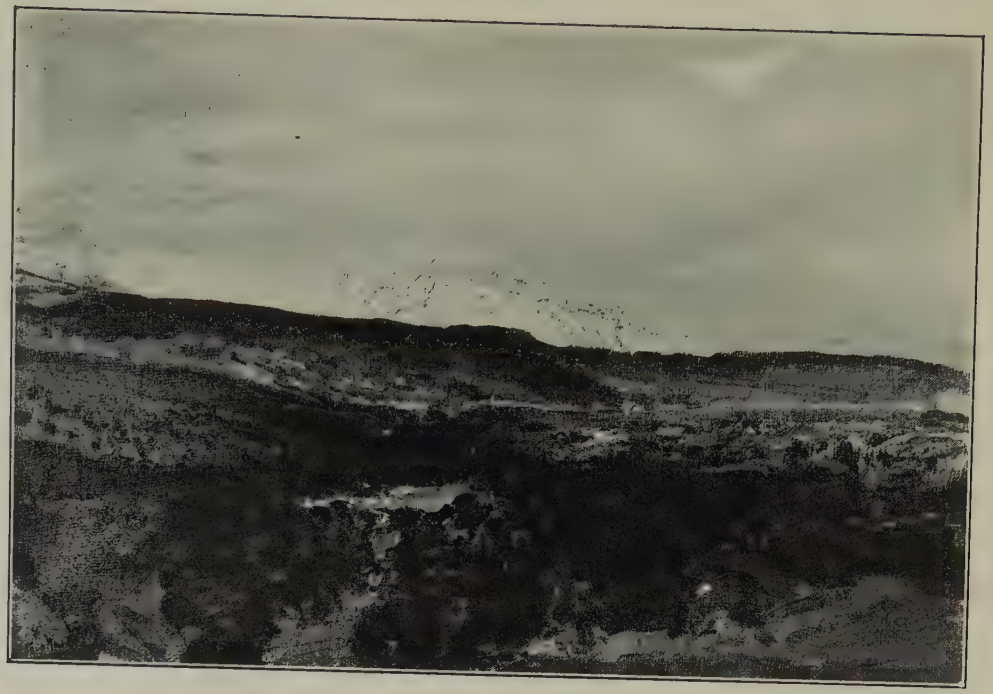
cia, ya en Madrid, varios cuadros de costumbres valencianas y multitud de acuarelas. También dibujó composiciones diversas para los diarios y revistas ilustradas. De aquella época data asimismo el cuadro *Una procesión en Burgos en el siglo* XVI, que figura el paso de la procesión por delante de una de las puertas de la Catedral. Es uno de los pocos cuadros del artista, de pequeñas dimensiones, en el cual hizo gala de una ejecución muy esmerada.

Los lienzos más importantes de aquellos años son dos, á saber: *Después del baño,* precioso desnudo de mujer, de tamaño natural, destacando de un fondo de mármoles blancos, y el famoso *Otra Margarita.*

Inaugura éste la importante serie de aquéllos que han dado á su autor puesto merecido entre los grandes pintores contemporáneos.

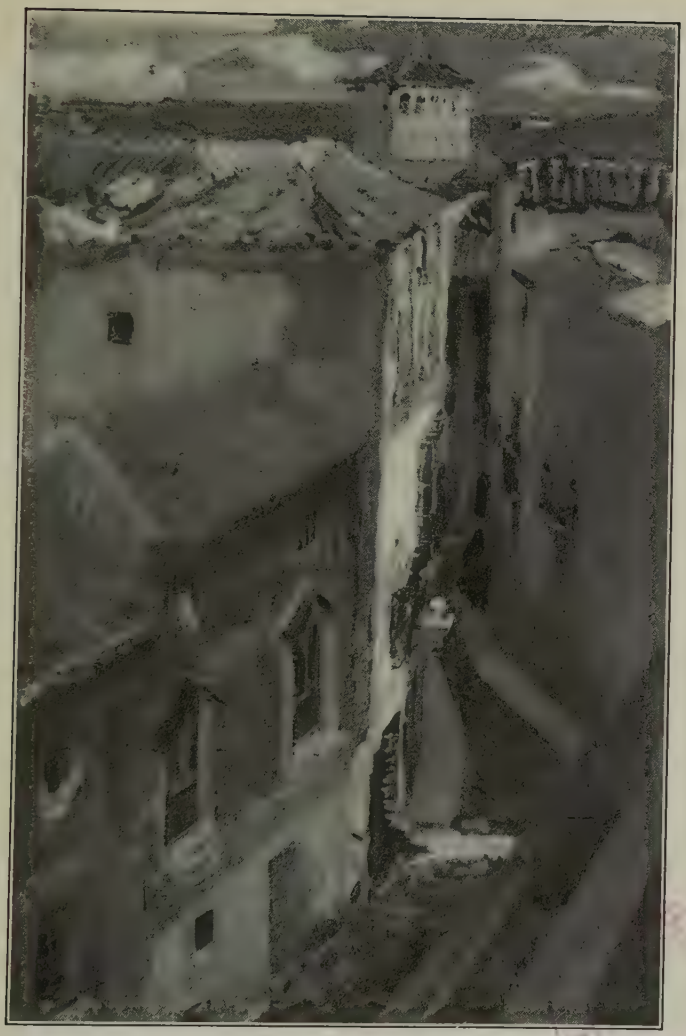
Sorolla, hijo del pueblo, templada su alma en las angustias y miserias del proletariado, halló en el asunto de esta obra ocasión propicia para reflejar los sentimientos que le inspiraran esas desdichas.

Para dar á la composición gran verdad, empleó idéntico procedimiento á los usados por él años atrás al pintar *El Dos de Mayo,* á saber: reconstituir la escena real con modelos y accesorios para reproducirla fielmente. A este fin instaló su lienzo en un vagón de tercera clase de la estación de El Grao, y dispuso la



5

El Torneo, Pardo



Una calle de Toledo

escena de esta manera: en primer término, es decir, en uno de los bancos del vagón, la madre infanticida con esposas en las manos, caída la cabeza, revelando el rostro remordimiento y pena. Sentados detrás de ella, los guardias civiles que custodian á la desventurada. Un envoltorio de ropas, como único accesorio, en el escueto fondo de madera pintada del vagón.

Meditó mucho y vaciló bastante hasta hallar la composición del cuadro; lograda ésta, el pintarlo fué obra de pocos días, durante los cuales, merced á un trabajo febril, mantuvo viva la inspiración del primer momento.

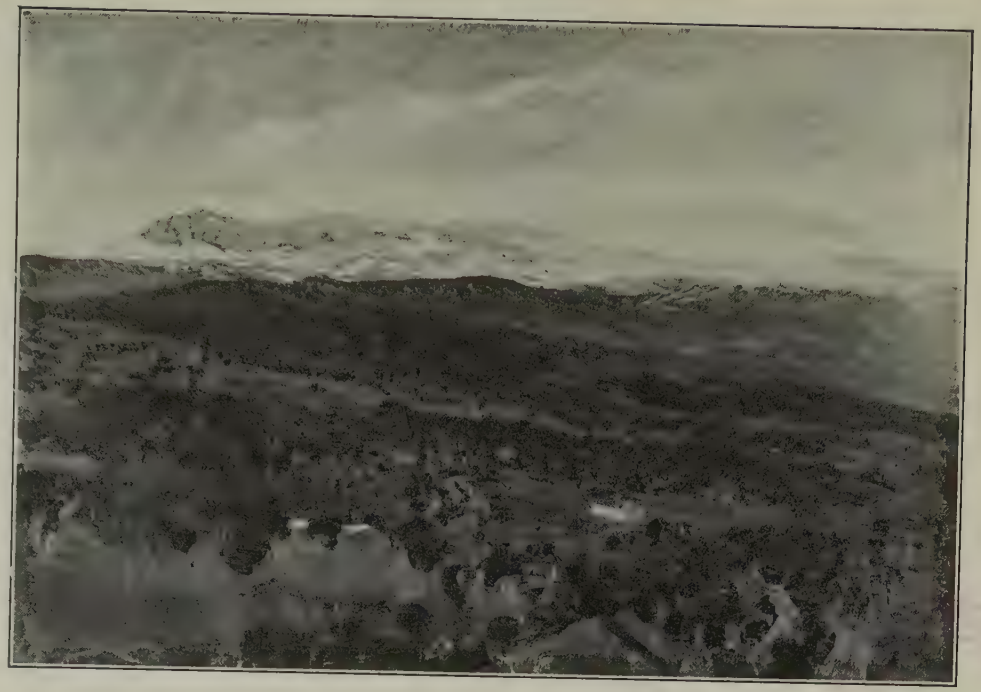
Del éxito feliz del cuadro son testimonio los aplausos que le fueron tributados en la Exposición internacional de Madrid de 1892 y la medalla de primera clase que se le concedió como premio. Triunfo análogo obtuvo en la Exposición de Chicago, en la cual, además de premiado, fué adquirido para el Museo de San Luis.

Fué coincidencia singular lo ocurrido en la ejecución de esta obra. Su autor no había visto nunca las obras de los pintores del Norte, y, sin embargo, se valió de medios análogos á los usados por éstos, pintando á la luz misma y en condiciones idénticas á aquéllas en que se desarrolló la escena real, huyendo de esta manera, en lo posible, de la iluminación con-

vencional propia de los estudios de pintor y del empleo de los modelos de oficio.

Verdad es que Sorolla, á falta de conocer las obras de Kroyer, Johansen, Zorn, Bergh, Werenskiold, Edelfelt, Harrison, Melchers y otros pintores modernos cuyos nombres se hicieron célebres desde la Exposición universal del 89, ya había estudiado, como queda dicho, las de Bastien Lepage, que fué uno de los iniciadores de la pintura naturalista moderna; y también en la Exposición de Madrid de 1890 tuvo ocasión de ver varios ejemplos de esta tendencia en algunas de las obras de D. José Jiménez Aranda, especialmente en la titulada *Una desgracia,* en la cual, inspirándose su autor en los pintores modernistas mencionados, y rompiendo con tradiciones y convencionalismos de escuela, se lanzó por la vía de un arte independiente basado en la interpretación sincera del natural por cima de todo.

El ejemplo de este ilustre artista y los sanos consejos que de él religiosamente escuchó, contribuyeron eficazmente á realizar la evolución tan manifiesta en el cuadro *Otra Margarita,* la cual se fué afirmando en obras sucesivas. Sorolla, que por una adivinación genial había pintado, á los veinte años, *El Dos de Mayo* directamente del natural, puestos los modelos al sol, abandonó por largo tiempo esta hermosa sin-



7

Vista del Torneo

8

Murallas de Segóvia

ceridad tan en consonancia con sus inclinaciones, por ir en pos de un arte aparatoso y convencional, y por tanto, amanerado, si bien más fácil para la comprensión y aceptación del público. Con *El Entierro de Cristo* rindió tributo á estas influencias nocivas para el desarrollo de sus cualidades; siguió vacilante solicitado por opuestas tendencias, hasta que por último halló la expresión propia y adecuada á sus sentimientos más íntimos en la interpretación sincera de la naturaleza en sus infinitos aspectos. Desde aquel momento, firme en su terreno, convencido de que para él no hay más maestro que el natural, se entregó al estudio directo de éste y á interpretarlo tal y como lo veía, sin afeites ni composturas. Desde entonces fué tema para sus cuadros cuanto á su paso le impresionaba: lo mismo pintaba escenas de interior, que otras al aire libre y en pleno sol. Su simpatía por las clases desheredadas le llevó á pintar no pocos cuadros inspirados en escenas de la vida y costumbres de aquéllas, con tal que en esas escenas viera él por cima de todo la nota pictórica. No se detuvo ante dificultad alguna. El movimiento y vida de la variedad de gentes que pululan en las playas levantinas, vestidas con trajes de mil colores que brillan al sol, destacando del azul del mar; las barcas pescadoras navegando con sus velas latinas, ó en la playa arrastradas por

parejas de robustos bueyes; los paisajes de la costa de Denia y Jávea, de color exuberante y vigorosos contrastes, todo fué interpretado por el artista de una manera pronta, fácil, enérgica, violenta á veces, en consonancia siempre con el asunto representado.

En la imposibilidad de enumerar las obras de Sorolla realizadas desde aquella fecha de 1892, señalaremos tan sólo las más capitales, empezando por la titulada *El día feliz,* la cual, en unión de *Otra Margarita, Después del baño,* y varios retratos y estudios, figuró en la citada Exposición de 1892.

Representa *El día feliz* el interior pobre de una barraca de las playas cercanas á Valencia, en la cual una niña, vestida con el traje blanco de primera comunión, besa respetuosamente la mano de un anciano ciego, de aspecto humilde, que se halla sentado en el centro y acompañado de varias personas. A través del hueco de la puerta se ve la playa iluminada vivamente por la luz del sol, la cual se percibe también por entre las tablas de la barraca. Domina en el lienzo un sentimiento de ternura que en nada amengua la verdad y el brío de la ejecución.

Fué adquirido en la Exposición de Venecia de 1899 para el Museo de Udine.

El año de 1893 expuso Sorolla por vez primera en el Salón de París, presentando el cuadro titulado *El*

Convento del Parral. Segovia

Alrededores de Segovia

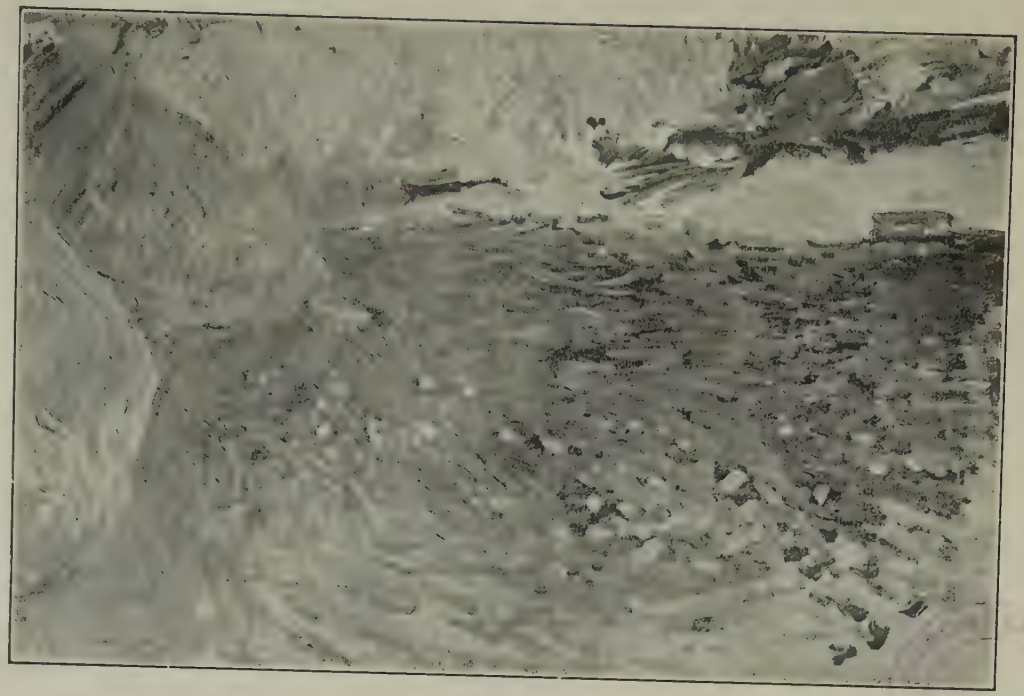
beso de la reliquia. Tiene por fondo una sacristía, en la cual varias mujeres y algún hombre, de aspecto humilde, se agolpan para besar el relicario que les muestra un sacerdote. Las figuras de este cuadro, de gran relieve y carácter, y el estudio tan concienzudo de sus cabezas y paños, bastan á explicar la favorable acogida que mereció, siendo colocado en sitio preferente, y premiado. Hoy se halla en la Diputación provincial de Bilbao, en cuya ciudad fué asimismo premiado.

Entre las obras presentadas por Sorolla en Madrid en la Exposición de 1895, merece el primer lugar la titulada *Bendición de la barca.* Fué pintada á la luz del sol poniente, que da al cuadro un efecto de color por demás pintoresco. En pie, en el centro de la barca, se halla el sacerdote que lee en el breviario las oraciones de la bendición, asistido por el acólito, cuyo blanco roquete es la nota más brillante del cuadro. En derredor de este grupo se hallan varios pescadores sentados en la barca. La figura de uno de éstos en el primer término y en la sombra, en oposición con las cabezas tan características del segundo, atezadas por el sol, que destacan del mar y cielo del fondo, constituye uno de los contrastes más felices y uno de los trozos más vigorosos y más realistas entre los varios de este género que la obra de Sorolla nos presenta.

En los mismos días en que admirábamos este cuadro en Madrid, se afirmaba su fama en París con la presentación, en el Salón anual de los Campos Elíseos de dos de sus obras capitales: *La vuelta de la pesca* y *trata de blancas*.

Ofrecen estos lienzos gran desemejanza: el primero, de luz y colores brillantes, retrata una escena de playa valenciana en pleno sol; en el segundo dominan las notas tristes y melancólicas á la tibia luz de un amanecer.

La vuelta de la pesca lo reúne todo: composición grandiosa de líneas, ponderación de masas y colores, justa relación entre los diferentes valores de los tonos, y conjunto y armonía en toda la obra. Abunda además en trozos de gran habilidad técnica, de la cual son buen ejemplo la pareja de bueyes en sombra destacando de las espumosas olas iluminadas por el sol; la enorme vela que corta el cielo con una línea pintoresca y movida, y el mar tratado de manera tan diferente según los términos del cuadro. Es éste uno de los más felices de su autor, y fué premiado con segunda medalla, obteniendo en virtud de este premio la honrosa distinción de artista *Hors concours*. Fué adquirido para él Museo del Luxemburgo de París, en donde se halla.



11

Reflejos del Cabo, Jávea

El Clamores, Segovia

Este cuadro y el de la *Bendición de la barca* pueden citarse como tipos de la numerosa serie compuesta de otros muchos inspirados en escenas de las playas de Valencia. Los elementos que los constituyen son análogos, idénticos sus fondos, y casi todos se hallan iluminados de igual modo á la plena luz solar.

No vaya á creerse que estos cuadros, ni la mayoría de los de Sorolla, fueron creados tan espontáneamente como se pudiera sospechar de la frescura y lozanía de su ejecución. Antes de acometer cada una de estas obras hubo un período de preparación, en el cual el pintor, por medio de estudios numerosos de dibujo y de color, ya del conjunto, ya del detalle, trató de familiarizarse con el asunto que había de representar, con los contrastes de luz y color, con las proporciones, forma y escorzos de cada una de las figuras del cuadro, y por último, con los efectos y relación de unos tonos con otros. Una vez penetrado de esto, colocaba los modelos en el sitio y á la hora y luz que había de tener el cuadro, y emprendía, libre ya de vacilaciones y cambios, la ejecución de la obra en el lienzo definitivo. A tan diversos estudios y sanos procedimientos deben en gran parte las obras de Sorolla, especialmente las pintadas al aire libre, la gran espontaneidad y frescura que muestran y el brío incomparable de su ejecución.

Entre los muchos cuadros pintados en las playas levantinas recordaremos los siguientes:

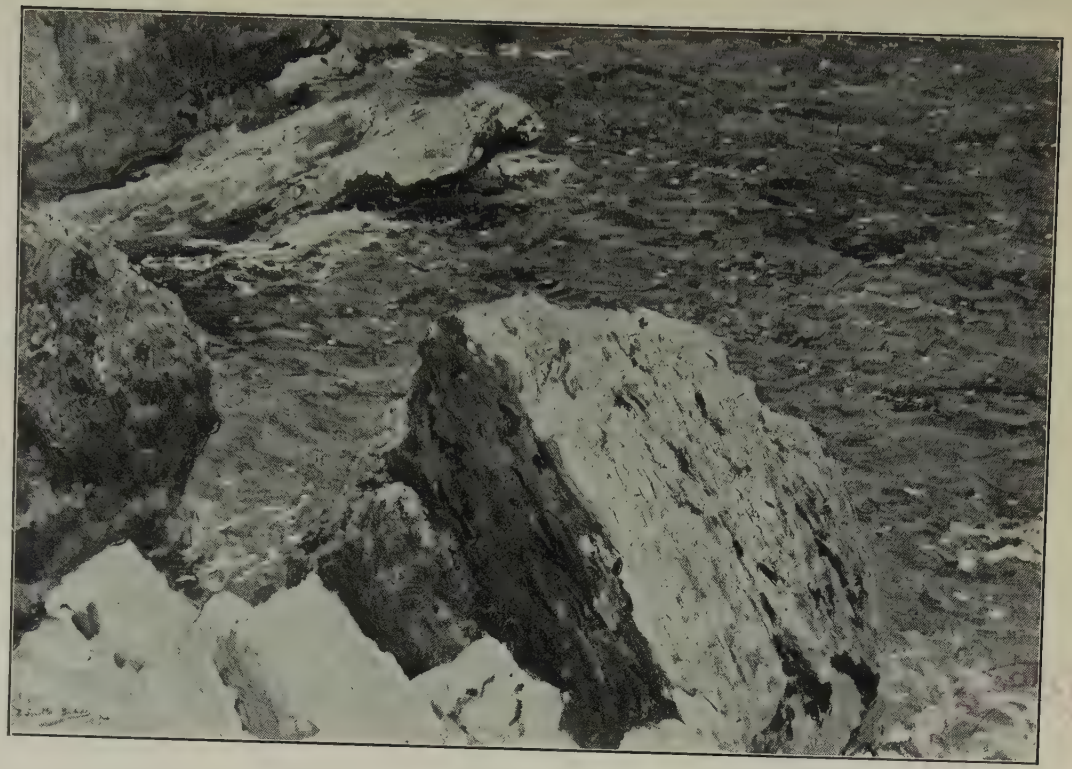
Pescadores valencianos. Retrata en el primer término á dos pescadores, limpiando dentro del mar sus utensilios de pesca; en el segundo una barca aparejada, y otras más lejos, en la línea del horizonte del mar. Es un cuadro todo luz y vibración solar, de un color brillante y armonioso. Fué premiado en la Exposición internacional de Berlín de 1896 y adquirido para el Museo de Arte moderno de esta ciudad.

Cosiendo la vela, presentado por vez primera en el Salón de París de 1897; en Munich, en el mismo año; en la Exposición internacional de Viena más tarde; en Madrid, en la Exposición del 99, y, por último, en la Universal recientemente celebrada en París; acogida en todas partes con aplauso unánime, y premiada en Munich y Viena con dos grandes medallas.

La playa de Valencia, precioso cuadro, de pequeñas dimensiones, poblado de multitud de animadas figuras y barcas en el fondo. Figuró en el Salón de París de 1898.

Las miserias de la pesca, pequeño también, de gran acento y color que le hacen inolvidable. Fué expuesto en el Salón del 99.

Por último, el titulado *Comiendo en la barca,* ya conocido en Madrid desde la última Exposición.



13

Rocas del Cabo, Jávea

Alquería, Alcira

Bastan éstos para poner de relieve los caracteres ya señalados en las obras de este género. Todas ellas pertenecen á la última década y son fruto de los trabajos del autor en los meses de verano; de aquéllos en los cuales otro artista menos avaro de su tiempo se hubiera entregado al reposo y al esparcimiento. Pero Sorolla no vive sino cuando trabaja: tras un verano de vertiginosa labor, acomete, durante los meses del invierno, en su estudio de Madrid, aquellas obras compatibles con la luz y condiciones del taller, alternándolas con las tareas de dirigir á sus numerosos discípulos, y la lectura y el cultivo de su espíritu, pensando siempre en la llegada de la primavera, y con ella de los días largos y templados, indispensables para pintar al aire libre.

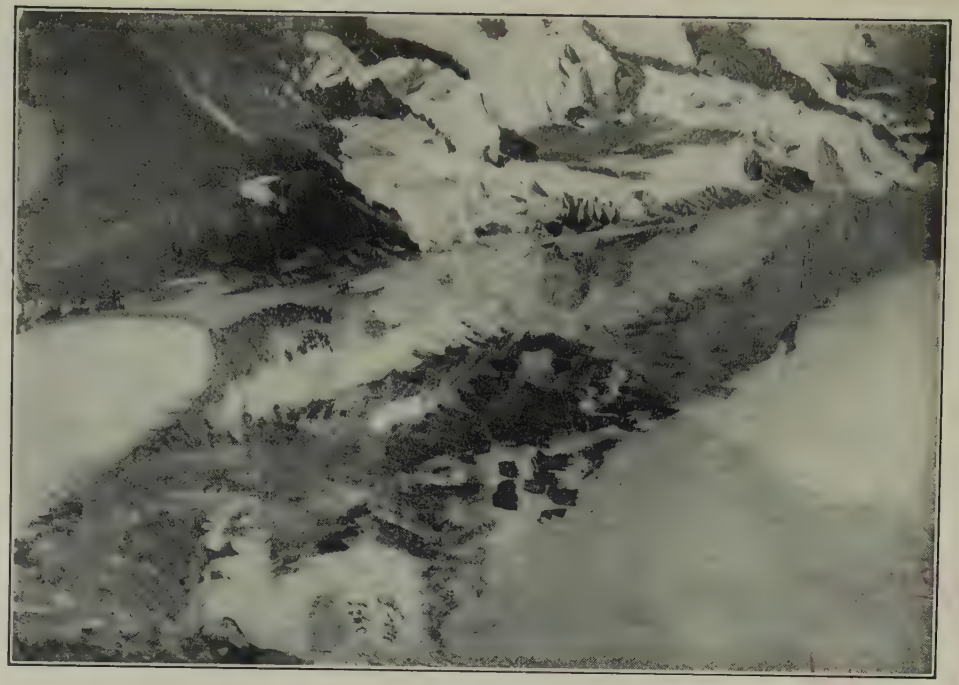
El estudio detenido de las obras de Sorolla pintadas en Madrid durante los últimos años, escenas de interior las unas, otras ya de género decorativo, ya de frutas y flores, y multitud de retratos, exigiría una extensión que no cabe en los límites de este trabajo.

Ya hemos mencionado una de las capitales, *Trata de blancas,* pintada en Madrid, dentro del estudio, para la cual hubo de disponer los elementos necesarios de fondo y luz á fin de reproducir la escena, la cual se desarrolla en un vagón de tercera clase, análogo al del cuadro *Otra Margarita.*

Representa asimismo una escena de interior el cuadro titulado *Una investigación,* expuesto en Madrid en 1897. Retrató el pintor á su amigo el Dr. Simarro en su laboratorio, rodeado de otros experimentadores, atentos todos al resultado de la investigación que da nombre al cuadro. Buena muestra de pintura realista nos ofrece este lienzo pintado en el propio laboratorio que le sirve de fondo, y siendo retratos fieles todos los personajes que en él aparecen.

A la representación de asuntos inspirados en escenas de su propio hogar, para los cuales tomó por modelos los seres más queridos de su corazón, ha consagrado el pintor buena parte de su actividad. Perteneciente á esta serie, citaremos la obra de pintura decorativa titulada *Mis chicos,* que figuró en la Exposición de Madrid de 1897. Es de una composición original, y ofrece un ejemplo de pintura realista aplicada á la decoración. Además, multitud de retratos de sus tres hijos, y por último, los diversos retratos de su esposa, alguno de ellos magistral, nos dan testimonio vivo de los afectos íntimos del pintor en relación con su arte.

Tal riqueza y diversidad de obras exige también diversidad de medios de expresión. La ejecución de los estudios de paisaje de las costas de Jávea, de un color exuberante y de contrastes violentos, ha de ser diferente de la empleada en los retratos ó en los



16

Sombra del Puente Alcántara, Toledo

cuadros de género de pequeñas dimensiones. De aquí uno de los muchos é interesantes aspectos que ofrece el conjunto de las obras de Sorolla.

No menor interés ofrece la manera con la cual interpreta la vibración de la luz, especialmente aquélla que produce el sol al iluminar directamente los objetos. Para dar idea de estos efectos, recurre á veces al uso de pinceladas menudas de gran acento y vibración, sin caer en las exageraciones de muchos pintores modernos de los llamados impresionistas, por aplicar igualmente la pincelada pequeña á todos los efectos, lo mismo á los de aire libre que á los de interior, y aun á los retratos pintados á la luz de un estudio.

Sorolla vió pronto y con gran sagacidad lo que hay de bueno y de verdadero en el impresionismo y en las fases diversas que presenta, y se lo asimiló inmediatamente. Así vemos proscritos de su paleta para los cuadros pintados al aire libre, los colores pardos y negros, poco transparentes, que hasta no hace mucho fueron los preferidos por los pintores para las sombras. Ofrecen, en cambio, sus lienzos una gran variedad de tintas azules y violetas, contrapuestas á las amarillas y rojas, con las cuales y con el uso discreto del blanco, obtiene acordes felicísimos y efectos de color muy brillantes y atrevidos.

La Exposición de Madrid de 1899 y la Universal

de París dieron ocasión al artista para mostrarse en toda su plenitud y madurez.

Vivo está el recuerdo de las obras de Sorolla en nuestra última Exposición, cuyo admirable y variado conjunto se componía de los cuadros *Cosiendo la vela,* desconocido hasta entonces en Madrid, pero que venía precedido de sus triunfos en París, Munich y Viena; el titulado *Comiendo en la barca;* los dos vigorosos estudios de paisaje de Jávea, y dos retratos. La opinión de la mayoría de los artistas se pronunció aclamando á un pintor de personalidad tan saliente y que con tal pujanza se presentaba en aquel Certamen. Faltóle á Sorolla, sin embargo, la consagración oficial de estos entusiasmos, y no obtuvo la medalla de honor, para la cual fué propuesto, único galardón que le faltaba para completar la lista de los premios reglamentarios.

Llevó Sorolla á la Exposición universal de París casi todas sus obras expuestas el 99 en Madrid, más dos cuadros pintados en la playa de Valencia en el verano del mismo año: *El baño* y *Triste herencia.*

Representa *El baño* una de las pintorescas escenas de aquella playa, tan felizmente interpretadas por su autor. Una mujer en pie, de espaldas al espectador, despliega una sábana, en la cual se prepara á envolver á un pequeñuelo que otra mujer trae en brazos. Este

17

Castillo de San Servando, Toledo

enseña su desnudo cuerpecillo, encogido aún por el frío del baño. En el fondo de esta escena el mar, en el cual hay varias barcas pescadoras con sus velas henchidas por el viento. Todo el cuadro á la luz de un claro sol matinal de verano. El azul del cielo, el del mar, los colores brillantes de los trajes y las tintas calientes y rosadas del cuerpo del niño, se armonizan con el blanco dominante de la sábana, y presentan un conjunto claro y transparente como el de una acuarela.

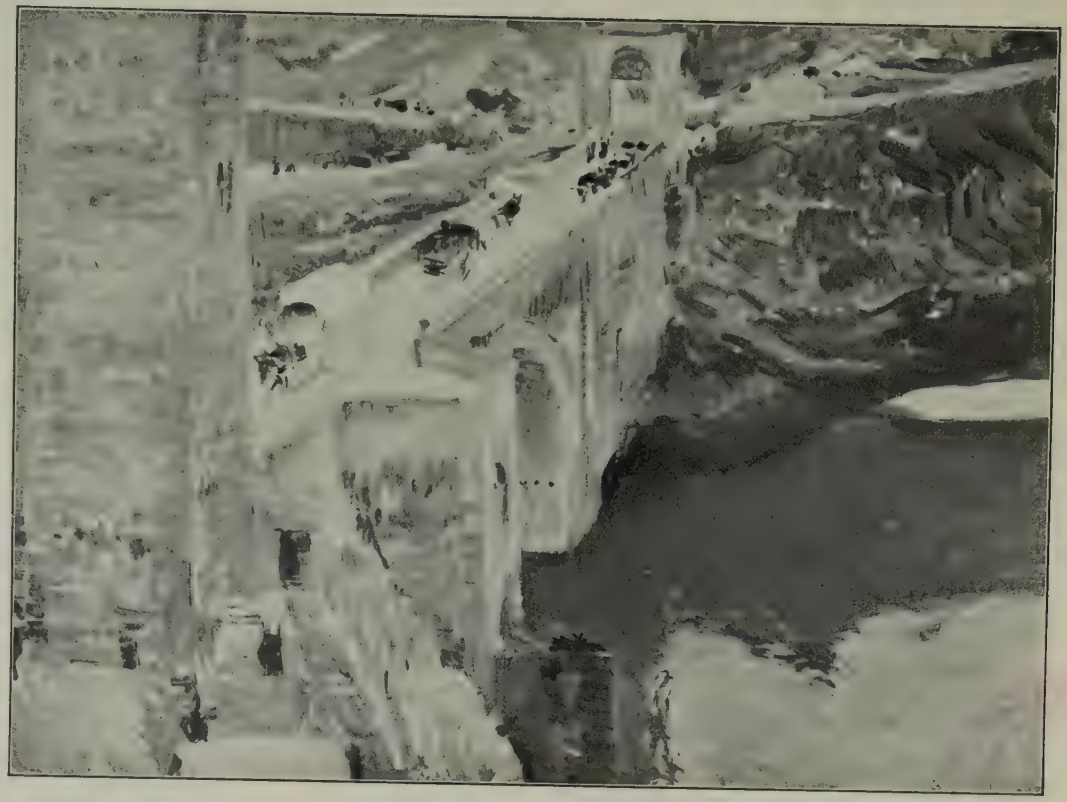
Ofrece este cuadro gran contraste con el de *Triste herencia,* tanto por el asunto como por lo opuesto de las ideas que cada uno de ellos nos despierta. En *El baño* todo es alegría y vida, al contrario del cuadro *Triste herencia,* en el cual están representadas las miserias de la existencia y de los vicios sociales. El fondo es el mismo en ambos cuadros; pero el uno refleja la luz de la mañana, el otro la caída de la tarde, y en las tintas del mar que le sirve de fondo hay algo de sombrío y de fatídico.

Vemos en este lienzo á un Hermano de la Congregación de San Juan de Dios acompañando al baño á multitud de niños degenerados, ciegos, tullidos, cojos, leprosos, enfermos, en fin, de todo género; escoria que la sociedad arroja de su seno y que aquella institución benéfica recoge y ampara. La figura del Hermano, robusta, vigorosa, hermosa en su tosquedad, se destaca

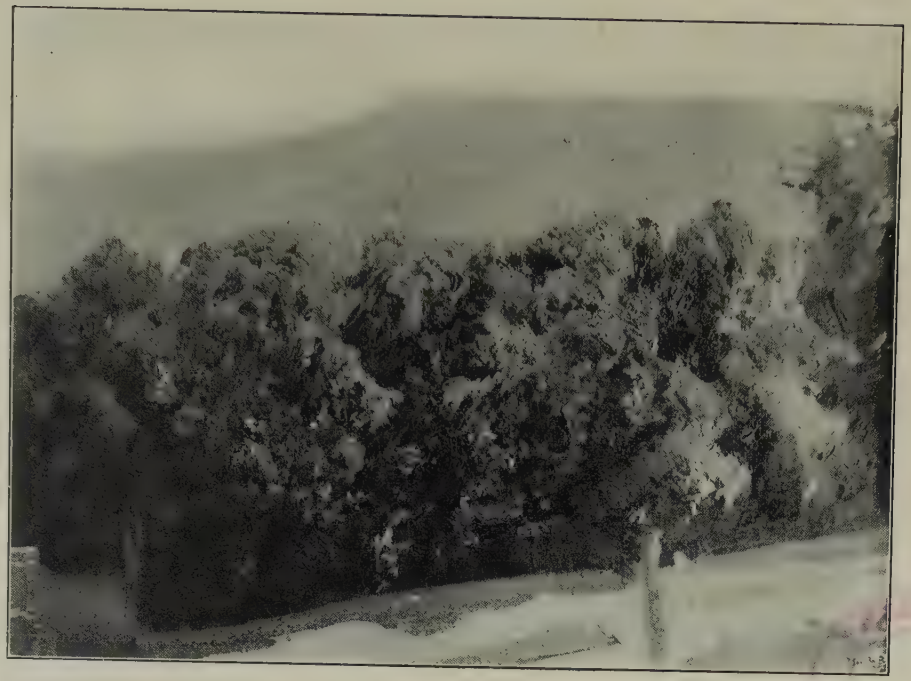
en pie con su hábito negro, del fondo del mar de un azul intenso. La severidad austera de esta figura, pintada con sobriedad y vigor, evoca el recuerdo de aquellos monjes y ascetas de los grandes maestros españoles del siglo XVII.

Ocupan el primer término del cuadro dos grupos, situados en el centro, á la orilla del mar, compuesto el uno del Hermano de San Juan de Dios atrayendo cariñosamente á un muchacho ciego que, con vacilante paso, á él se acoge. El otro grupo lo forman tres muchachos, dos de ellos con muletas conduciendo al tercero, ciego; todos desnudos. En segundo término, en el mar, varios grupos y figuras sueltas de muchachos bañándose, mostrando en los cuerpos raquíticos y degenerados los estigmas de sus enfermedades y lacerías. A la derecha del Hermano aparece un niño que asoma del agua su busto iluminado por el sol, figura graciosa, llena de color y vida, única nota alegre de aquella escena de tristeza y miseria, cuya interpretación tan realista y sentida aviva los sentimientos tétricos que la contemplación del cuadro despierta.

Al lado de *Triste herencia* se hallaba colocado, en París, el titulado *Comiendo en la barca*, en el cual se ven varios pescadores comiendo, á la sombra de la vela, cuadro de gran verdad y bello colorido, muy celebrado en Madrid en la última Exposición. No



Puente de Alcántara, Toledo



20

La Selva, Granja

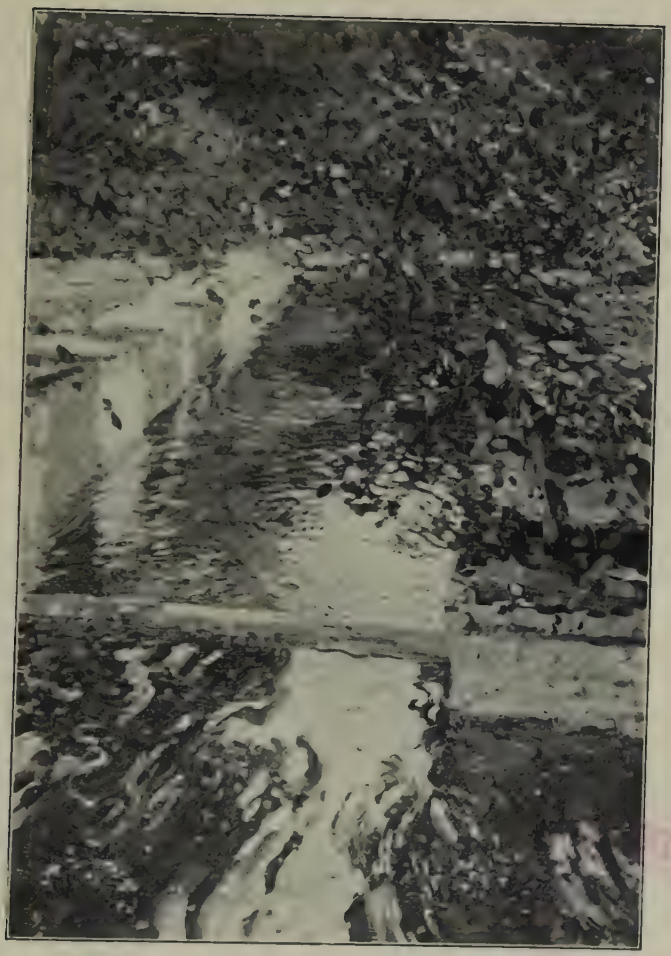
lejos de ambos, en la misma sala, el lienzo de gran tamaño *Cosiendo la vela,* uno de aquéllos en los cuales Sorolla logró vencer las mayores dificultades.

El protagonista de este cuadro es, según la expresión de un ilustre crítico, una vela de barco; y tal es el interés que ha sabido dar el pintor á los pliegues y accidentes del gran trozo de lona, á las figuras tan características de hombres y mujeres que en coserlo se ocupan, al emparrado y á los tiestos que matizan la pintoresca escena, y más que todo á los brillantes rayos de sol que se filtran á través de las hojas iluminando el cuadro con chispazos vivísimos, que aquél que lo contempla se interesa por asunto tan trivial de igual manera que si tuviera ante su vista la representación de algo muy dramático ó transcendental. Ejemplo vivo del mágico poder del arte, que eleva á las regiones de lo imperecedero aquello que en la realidad pasa inadvertido por vulgar é insignificante.

A poco de abierta la Exposición, reunido el Jurado internacional de Pintura, acordó éste visitar las secciones de todos los países. Al entrar en la española los Jurados, entre los cuales tuve la honra de contarme, fuí testigo de la impresión causada por las obras de Sorolla. El nombre del pintor fué aclamado con verdadero entusiasmo, y desde aquel momento tuve confianza absoluta del éxito que había de alcan-

zar Sorolla en la votación de premios. Fué ésta honrosísima para él, pues obtuvo por gran mayoría, el primer día de la votación, uno de los veinte Diplomas de Gran Premio, únicos que se votaron; y fué aún más honrosa la distinción si se tiene en cuenta el rango y la calidad de los premiados. El nombre de Sorolla figura desde aquel día al lado de los de Dagnan Bouveret, Lenbach, Alma Tadema, Kroyer, Zorn y algunos otros de igual fama.

Visité con Sorolla pocos días después la Exposición universal, y debo confesar en honor suyo que, lejos de mostrarse envanecido con su triunfo, al comparar sus obras con otras muchas de aquel gran certamen, y al ver las propias á una luz y en un ambiente tan diverso de aquél en que fueron creadas, declaró con noble sinceridad las imperfecciones de que á sus ojos adolecían. En efecto: la intensidad de la luz de los países meridionales, merced á la cual parecen tan coloreados los cuadros pintados en éstos, les perjudica sobremanera al ser transportados al Norte, en donde quedan por lo común fríos y descoloridos, cuando no tristes y obscuros. De ahí que, á pesar de cuanto se cree y afirma, los grandes coloristas antiguos y modernos abundan entre los pintores del Norte mucho más que entre los meridionales, pues aquéllos, á falta del color y brillantez de la luz que



Río de las Truchas, Granja

Patio de Las Danzas. Alcazar, Sevilla

ilumina sus obras, se ven obligados á suplir estos elementos con los recursos de la paleta. En pocas visitas á la Exposición se hizo cargo de cuanto le interesaba conocer. Apasionado de los pintores modernos que más afinidad tienen con su manera de sentir y de interpretar la naturaleza, no llevó su entusiasmo hacia ellos al punto de menospreciar á otros de cualidades opuestas: antes al contrario, en su afán de perfeccionamiento presintió la posibilidad de realizar un arte que armonizara tan diversas tendencias. Es imposible, decía, que no puedan reunirse en un mismo lienzo la sinceridad de Kroyer y el ambiente de Zorn, con el vigor y relieve de un retrato de Bonnat y el carácter que sabe dar á sus figuras Jean Paul Laurens.

Sin detenerse en París más que algunos días, volvió á Valencia y de allí marchó á la costa de Jávea á emprender las tareas del verano. La campaña ha durado menos tiempo, pero ha sido más fecunda aún que las anteriores, y el resultado de ella una nueva muestra de la ductilidad de su talento.

No nos detendremos en describir los diversos cuadros pintados á raíz de su visita á la Exposición; pero sí diremos que en dos de ellos, que titula *Fin de la jornada* y *Escaldando la uva,* aparecen de un modo claro transportadas al lienzo las ideas que le despertara dicha Exposición. Estas dos obras muestran

mayor riqueza y más brillantez de color que sus obras anteriores. Además, se observa en ellas gran contraste entre las figuras de los primeros planos, de mucha corporeidad y acento, y los otros términos, sin que esto perjudique al ambiente y al conjunto de dichos cuadros.

De un pintor que, joven aún, ha revelado en tantas y tan diversas obras dones excepcionales para el arte que cultiva, y que á estas prendas suma gran entendimiento, penetración sagaz y laboriosidad constante, se deben esperar, en el porvenir, nuevas y más sorprendentes creaciones. Confiados en esta esperanza, damos término al presente estudio, en el cual hemos procurado que no domine en modo alguno la pasión hija del afecto que profesamos al amigo, ni la del entusiasmo que nos inspira el artista.

23

Adelfas

Cañada, Asturias

Puente de San Martín, Toledo

M. SOROLLA Y BASTIDA

LA CRITIQUE d'art pourra mentionner en l'exposition de M. Sorolla y Bastida, faite à la galerie Petit en juin 1906, la plus considérable qui se soit vue à Paris depuis celle de M. Albert Besnard, révélée dans le même lieu et le même mois l'année précédente, et mise à part celle de Fantin-Latour qui fut posthume. Par l'importance de son groupement de cinq cents œuvres, par l'ensemble de ses conditions, la variété des sujets et de la technique, l'exposition de M. Sorolla est apparue comme un fait d'art notable, un sujet de curiosité, de discussion, de réflexion.

Elle a eu un très grand succès. Depuis plus de dix ans l'artiste envoyait aux Salons des Artistes Français des œuvres importantes : l'une d'elles est au Musée du Luxembourg, et toutes furent accueillies avec faveur, notamment l'an passé où des comptes rendus enthousiastes saluèrent le *Soleil du Soir* et l'*Été*. Cependant cette exposition aura été pour le grand public une

révélation. Le peintre connu est maintenant célèbre. Cette réunion, rêvée par tous les peintres, est des plus périlleuses, et l'on a vu maintes fois des réputations enviables succomber à cette expérience ; je ne connais pas d'artiste moderne à qui elle ait plus merveilleusement réussi qu'à M. Sorolla. Il semble qu'il ait surgi, triomphateur ignoré la veille, tant le contraste a été grand entre son très honorable rang de peintre étranger, hors concours et décoré, et la gloire qui lui échut dès le premier jour de l'exposition Petit. Il arrivait pourtant à la fin d'une période des plus chargées, en pleine fièvre des Salons, et après une telle série d'expositions de toutes sortes que l'esprit et la rétine des plus acharnés amateurs de peinture demandaient grâce. Le public a paru retrouver toute sa fraîcheur d'impressions pour fêter cet art naturiste, comme si l'air maritime et salubre qui y circule avait tonifié brusquement les nerfs les plus lassés par l'admiration.

A l'écart du groupe des peintres espagnols modernes, si variés et si intéressants, MM. Zuloaga, Anglada, Rusinol, et pour des raisons différentes, M. Sorolla, leur aîné, s'est donc fait d'un seul coup une situation dont l'éclat subit dissimule la longue préparation. Cependant la presque unanimité des éloges a laissé place à quelques réserves sur les tendances

Naranjos

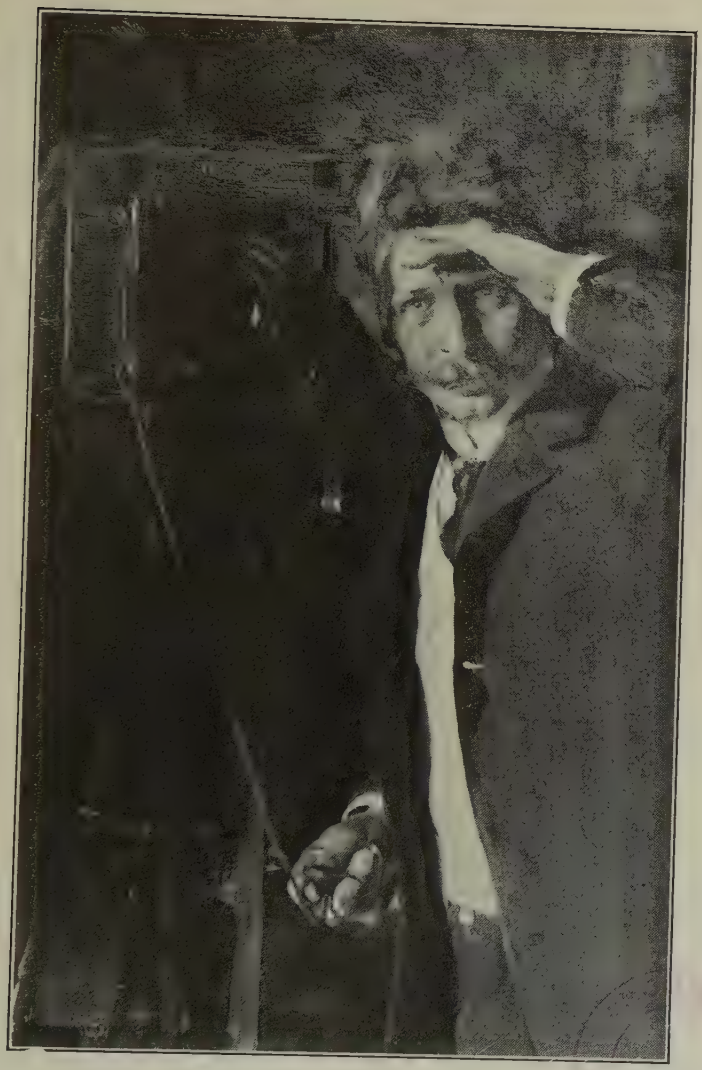
Cordeleros

elles-mêmes d'un artiste dont la technique reste indiscutée. J'aimerais apprécier ces réserves et ces tendances.

Avant de solliciter le raisonnement esthétique, le premier regard jeté sur l'exposition de M. Sorolla imposait une constatation péremptoire: celle d'une maîtrise picturale extraordinaire, celle d'un *don* de la nature. Il y a des artistes qu'on étudie, qu'on pénètre lentement; on se familiarise avec eux, on les estime graduellement davantage, on les scrute, on les comprend, on les aime. Mais il y en a d'autres qui éblouissent et subjuguent en une seconde. Avant même d'avoir eu le temps de se faire une opinion, on subit une magie. On oublie ses théories, ses préférences, les objections qu'on tenait prêtes, les désirs qu'on apportait; toutes les petites défenses restrictives de l'esprit contre l'admiration tombent d'un seul coup. La volupté nerveuse, la joie sensorielle parle plus haut que la pensée. On peut garder au fond de soi des réserves, mais on se tait et on n'a qu'à s'incliner, parce qu'on est en présence d'un être humain qui, manifestement, a reçu un don mystérieux et souverain, et fut créé pour peindre comme l'oiseau pour voler. Ce n'est pas là le prestige du virtuose qui vainc toutes les difficultés; c'est, bien au delà, l'état serein, radieux, d'un être pour qui les difficultés n'exis-

tent même pas, et qui peint aussi naturellement qu'il parle, sans même se douter qu'il en puisse être autrement et que le tour de force perpétuel ne soit pas l'habitude de tout peintre. Devant des hommes ainsi doués, que faire, sinon s'émerveiller du caprice de la nature qui les mit à même de créer en se jouant, et en quelques minutes, ce que d'autres ne réussiraient pas en un an d'effort sincère, et même en toute une vie? "Il en est qui jamais n'ont connu leur idole," et qu'à ceux-là se consacre notre pieux apitoiement; mais il en est qui la peuvent traiter en égale, et dont le travail n'est qu'une longue joie, une capiteuse volupté parce que leur œil et leur main sont de miraculeux instruments. Reconnaître ce miracle est une obligation indépendante de toute préférence personnelle; il se manifeste en M. Sargent, en M. Besnard, en M. Zorn: même pour qui ne les *aime* pas, ce sont des hommes exceptionnels, inclassables. M. Sorolla y Bastida complète dans notre époque, ce quatuor.

Cela n'implique pas une comparaison entre ces peintres. On a noté certaines analogies entre M. Besnard et M. Zorn, entre M. Besnard et M. Sorolla—et je reviendrai sur celles-ci pour les nier d'ailleurs. Un peintre aussi protéiforme que M. Besnard, ayant touché à toutes les formes et à tous les sentiments, s'apparente toujours par quelque côté à n'importe lequel



Señor Franzen

Rocas del Faro, Biarritz

cents études, pas une trace d'hésitation : des tons posés une fois pour toutes, sans repentirs, avec une infaillibilité étrange, du bout d'un pinceau prestigieux : un dessin uniquement obtenu par le plan, le modelé et la valeur, dans la pâte : une exceptionnelle faculté de suggérer la qualité de chaque matière, les surfaces n'étant plus de la peinture, mais réellement de l'eau, de la chair, de la pierre ou de l'étoffe : une fougue frénétique, la plus folle joie de peindre résultant de la plus grande difficulté tentée—et tout à coup, auprès de ces pyrotechnies éblouissantes, de ces fanfares de laque, de chrome, de cobalt, les plus suaves notations en gris et beige, avec une réticence et une fragilité toutes whistlériennes. On avait l'impression d'une science illimitée, exaltée par l'ivresse créatrice, d'une science vivante et native.

Les thèmes de M. Sorolla furent très variés. Il tint à les faire tous connaître, afin qu'on pût juger de son évolution. On peut contester cette pensée : évidemment cent cinquante œuvres choisies parmi cette foule d'une opulence presque écrasante eussent donné de l'artiste un criterium de perfection, et constitué un groupement tel que nul autre peintre actuel n'en eût peut-être offert un pareil. Mais M. Sorolla, producteur fécond, tenait à imposer par la masse, et à dire avec probité non ce qu'il avait fait de mieux,

Puente de San Martín, Toledo

Pescadora valenciana

mais tout ce qu'il avait fait; et dans une exposition individuelle résumant vingt années de peinture, ce point de vue en peut valoir un autre. Il y avait donc là des portraits d'hommes et de femmes, les uns presque académiques, les autres plus personnels, trois ou quatre très beaux; d'anciennes toiles, comme certaine nudité sur soie rose, d'un faire tout scolastique; des dessins, des recherches de paysages lumineux d'une facture très minutieuse, précieusement ouvragée, rappelant Fortuny; et enfin, en très grande majorité, les œuvres de pure étude atmosphérique: quelques grands tableaux, des figures, des scènes de plages, baignades, arrivées de barques de pêches, tumultueux embarquements de bestiaux, et une foule d'études minuscules, de bouts de panneaux, où, plus peut-être encore que partout, s'attestait la génialité picturale d'un notateur incomparable, plus proche de Monticelli que de l'impressionnisme.

La diversité de ces œuvres montrait que, si M. Sorolla avait toujours été en possession d'un don inouï, ses tendances et ses goûts n'en avaient pas moins connu l'hésitation, et presque l'inquiétude: sa conscience avait erré, si sa main et son œil n'avaient jamais failli. La série de ses portraits accusait à ce point de vue d'intéressants symptômes; les uns, effigies féminines en robes de bal, portraits de bourgeois,

étaient d'excellentes choses propres à faire honneur à nos officiels les plus cotés, mais sans originalité marquée. D'autres valaient plus, par la recherche aiguë du caractère; un portrait de Mme Guerrero en costume de théâtre, un autre d'une dame en mantille noire, faisaient penser à Goya de la façon dont M. Zuloaga y fait songer. Enfin quelques figures d'Espagnols célèbres, M. Echegaray, M. Blasco Ibanez, M. le Dr Cajal, M. Perez Galdos, M. Beruete, M. Canalejas, traitées puissamment, avec des noirs profonds, des constructions larges, de beaux méplats, des carnations pleines de vie et d'énergie, attestaient un peintre capable de faire paraître sur la chair réelle l'âme, le caractère, la pensée individuelle, les signes professionnels de ses modèles. Un portrait de garçonnet debout auprès de deux fillettes en rouge rappelait les meilleures figures de M. Lavery. Toutefois, tous ces portraits restaient un peu lourds dans leur solide affirmation des types, un peu trop uniformes dans le contraste des faces éclairées et des fonds ou vêtements sombres.

C'était d'un excellent ouvrier, d'un scrupuleux peintre, mais d'une personnalité insuffisante. Un autre artiste eût pu les signer. Il en est tout autrement des marines et des études. Cela, c'est à M. Sorolla, et bien à lui, et à lui seul.

Camino de San Esteban, Asturias

Estanque del Alcázar, Sevilla

Assurément, depuis l'exposition Besnard, personne ne nous avait donné la sensation de cette force heureuse qui s'accroît, qui multiplie ses ressources de tableau en tableau, et qui, d'œuvre en œuvre, s'explique à soi-même et s'exalte jusqu'à cette sorte d'ivresse de peindre au delà de tout obstacle : en sorte qu'au lieu de s'atténuer, comme devant les roueries de la virtuosité, la sensation du visiteur se renforce et se magnifie. Il y avait sur ces murailles une explication splendide et frémissante des triomphes de la nature, le poème ensoleillé, tumultueux, irisé, de la mer méridionale. Personne n'avait jamais à ce point exprimé le tumulte et la transparence de la vague, la plongée des corps nus dans l'eau, la fanfare des grandes voiles claquantes au vent du large, obèses sous la brise qui les emplit, et déployant en plein azur d'immenses drapeaux de lumière. Il fallait remonter aux plus belles pages de Claude Monet, à la série du golfe Juan, par exemple, pour trouver l'équivalent de certaines mers étales, vertes et dorées comme des scarabées, des certains rochers blancs ou rouges dont l'éclatant incendie, soleil valencien, était presque insoutenable. Là tout était magistral, la tonalité, le mouvement marin, la structure des masses rocheuses, la valeur, la vie, la fougue superbe de l'exécution. Enlevées sur nature en quelques heures, ces pages ivres de brise marine et

de clarté égalaient les plus surprenants miracles de la notation impressionniste.

Mais on y trouvait, à l'analyse, des qualités solides, une assise, un savoir, que bien peu d'impressionnistes ont pu montrer dans leur art captivant mais vacillant où la vibration chromatique trop souvent dévore les formes et détruit la stabilité de l'architecture du sol. Une connaissance profonde de la forme humaine permettait à M. Sorolla de faire surgir de l'eau écumeuse et smaragdine des corps nus dont l'anatomie était impeccable. Telle toile radieuse, par exemple celle où deux gamins sortaient à demi de la vague pour se cramponner à l'amarre d'un canot blanc, n'était pas seulement merveilleuse par la hardiesse de la mise en cadre, par l'audace de remplir entièrement un grand tableau avec de l'eau, sans ciel, par la diaprure du fluide marin, par l'incandescence inouïe des blancs de l'esquif ; l'œil s'y attachait avec le sentiment de la sécurité absolue, parce que tout, en cette vaste étude frénétique, était parfaitement à sa place, parce que sous la peau des nageurs, dont la luisance humide était criante de vérité, se devinaient des muscles et une ossature dessinés par un maître du mouvement. Cette maîtrise de la forme, nullement académique mais toujours amoureuse des vérités de l'organisme mouvant, se retrouvait dans toutes les figures de M. Sorolla.

35

Puerto de Valencia

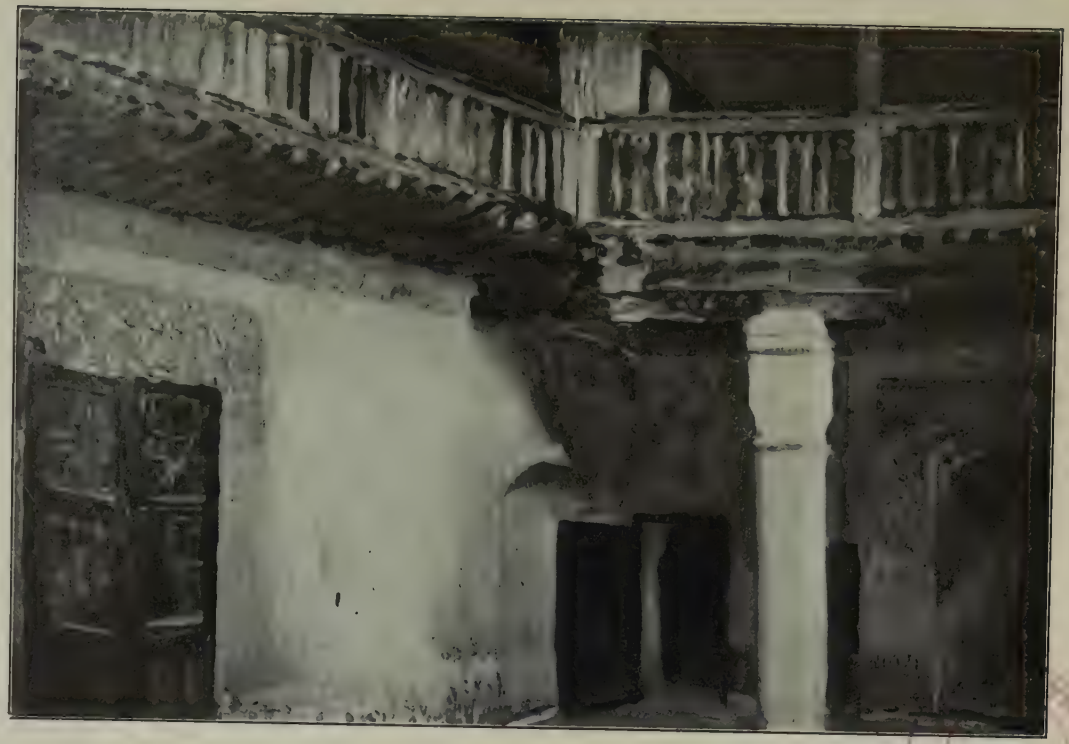
Amontonando el heno. Asturias

Selon la dimension, selon l'opportunité, une indication synthétique suffisait, ou une minutieuse étude s'offrait au regard : mais toujours, sous l'irradiation lumineuse, les saillies d'un bras nu, les nodosités d'une main de pêcheur, le gonflement d'un muscle crural, la cambrure des côtes sous la chair d'un thorax, l'attache d'un nez ou d'une mâchoire demeuraient rigoureusement véridiques, sans une faute, sans un escamotage, et restaient pourtant subordonnés au caractère, à la synthèse, à l'impression générale.

C'est un jeu, pour M. Sorolla, que de placer à un point donné d'un tableau une valeur essentielle, de composer avec deux ou trois taches où l'œil est ramené logiquement, de définir les plus insaisissables caprices du contre-jour, de donner un ton aux ombres les plus neutres, de jeter de bas en haut le reflet d'une eau verte sur le torse orangé d'un marin qui se penche, de déployer une voile blanche sur un ciel blanc, de verser l'ombre d'une roche sur l'écume d'une vague, de noter le ton du soleil oblique sur le pelage d'un taureau ou le ton de l'ombre d'une rose blanche sur un corsage de linon blanc, d'harmoniser le profond indigo d'une mer entre l'ocre rougeoyant d'une falaise et les bruns dorés d'une plage à l'ombre, de grouper vingt personnages nus sur une grève où l'eau clapote, de les faire courir, rire, gambader, crier, briller sous le ciel

de flamme, tandis que s'exalte l'envol des vastes voiles de balancelles. C'est un jeu, pour un tel peintre, que de peindre des personnages de grandeur naturelle en clair sur clair, blouses bleu ciel sur fond de ciel bleu, corsages blancs sur murs blancs : de définir le frisselis du soleil, les jours torrides, sur une mer presque mauve comme au clair de lune, de faire chanter la coque vermillonnée d'un steamer, rouge à hurler, sur le cobalt sirupeux de la Méditerranée en temps de mistral, de franger du feuillage noirâtre des orangers l'écarlate d'un talus éventré, montrant sa terre argileuse aux ardeurs assourdies de sang séché.

Mais c'est aussi un jeu, pour M. Sorolla, dessinateur, de modeler la jambe maigre d'un vieux matelot, le torse potelé d'un marmot, le cou tendineux d'une vieille, le sein fleuri d'une belle fille, le dos d'un tâcheron, et de différencier ces musculatures : cet homme sait dessiner tout, enchâsser un œil brûlant dans une arcade profonde, faire saillir un maxillaire, crisper une main, emplir de son exact volume de chair un vêtement ; il sait le secret de la matière d'un rocher, d'une eau, d'une toile au vent, la forme d'un gréement, la différence de plongée d'un bateau plein et d'un bateau vide, l'anatomie d'un taureau, d'un cheval, comme la forme d'une grappe de raisin ; il sait faire sentir la pesanteur d'une mer horizontale, l'aspect de



Casa del Greco, Toledo

plaine aride, opaque, plombée, de cette mer sous certains soleils et dans certaines perspectives montantes, suggérer la place exacte du soleil dans le ciel en des marines où l'eau occupe tout le tableau jusqu'au haut du cadre : il sait la couleur précise du bordage d'une barque sous un ciel d'orage, le ton spécial d'une rose-thé au couchant sur un mur rose, et la tonalité d'une peau féminine sous un linge violet dans de l'eau verte. En un mot, il sait tout, il perçoit et il rend tout, avec une acuité et une rapidité affolantes, et son langage pictural est d'une richesse, d'une verve, d'une joie, d'une abondance inouïes, se riant des difficultés qui feraient peiner et pâlir tout autre peintre, et qui ne semblent qu'accroître son désir de rendre l'excitation magnifique d'un regard et d'une main qui ne refusent rien l'un à l'autre.

La sorte de joie païenne et triomphante de cette exécution magnétise le spectateur. Il s'est senti sur le champ en présence d'un peintre qui le mènera à travers une vie heureuse, pléthorique, allègre et splendide, et il suit, subjugué. Cette joie de la facture, le vertige délicieux qui enivre un grand coloriste, ferait à elle seule de M. Sorolla un des très rares artistes de la joie : ses sujets y concourent. Voici un peintre, et rien de plus : un peintre qui ne philosophe pas, qui ne pense pas, qui ne suggère pas, et qui ne s'occupe que

de rendre ce qu'il aime, les jardins, les femmes, les enfants, les bateaux, les beaux golfes, la mer, la plage, le ciel, les baignades, les arbres, les fruits, tout ce que la nature a fait de beau, tout ce qu'elle offre gratuitement aux tourmenteurs de nous-mêmes que nous sommes, sans reconnaissance pour ses dons. Ce Valencien, près de sa ville natale, s'installe l'été sur la petite plage de Javer : et il nous raconte ce qu'il y voit, tout simplement, c'est-à-dire la vie libre dans le plein air chaleureux, la rumeur marine, les nudités dans le clapotis, la féerie des heures. Mais restituer cela à un si génial degré, avec une puissance si vivifiante, n'est-ce point penser et suggérer ?

On ne trouve que joie dans cette œuvre. C'est à peine si deux tableaux donnent une note différente : l'un, tendre symphonie de blancs et de beiges, montre perdues aux vagues d'un grand lit la tête d'une accouchée et celle de son enfant. Œuvre émotive et douce, qui, subitement, chez le frémissant coloriste, décèle une mélancolique intuition. L'autre œuvre, plus ancienne, montre l'intérieur d'un wagon de troisième classe où une mégère surveille le sommeil de quelques pauvres prostituées vautrées aux banquettes, écrasées de fatigue, gisant dans leurs jupes criardes et fanées, tandis que le train les emmène vers l'ignominie lamentable de leur destin. Le tableau est d'un

39

Torre de entrada en Toledo

40

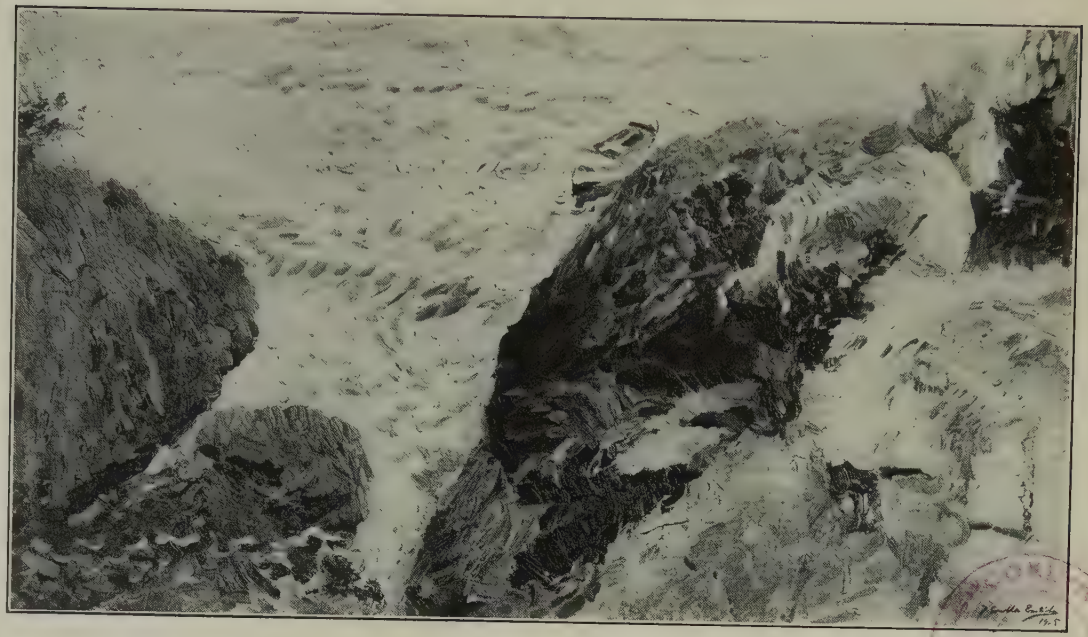
Las Covachuelas, Toledo

homme qui a su réfléchir sur la misère morale, s'émouvoir, pénétrer le caractère sombre et cruel de certaines destinées. A lui seul il permettrait de répondre à l'objection de ceux qui, insatisfaits d'une si belle série d'œuvres heureuses, incrimineraient le peintre sur son défaut de "pensée." Mais il est indémontrable qu'en s'en tenant à considérer comme "pensée" le fait *d'exprimer* toutes les réalités chatoyantes de la vie, M. Sorolla n'ait pas fait tout son devoir de peintre, de visionnaire et d'expressif.

Au surplus, c'est à propos de lui, plus peut-être que de tout autre teneur de pinceau, qu'il serait intéressant de rappeler que le nom de "peintre" a fini par désigner des producteurs absolument dissemblables. Entre Memlinck et Claude Monet, entre Rembrandt et Tiepolo, entre Carpaccio et Fragonard, entre Holbein et Turner, la désignation du terme "peintre" ne peut servir de commune mesure qu'en parlant du moyen employé. La plupart de nos querelles esthétiques dérivent de nos préférences, et de notre manie de rabaisser tel peintre au profit de tel autre parce que la similitude de leurs outils nous induit à les comparer, et nous dissimule leur totale dissemblance de volontés, de sensibilités, de recherches. L'invention de cinq ou six vocables pour désigner les divers usages faits de la couleur par des hommes nous met-

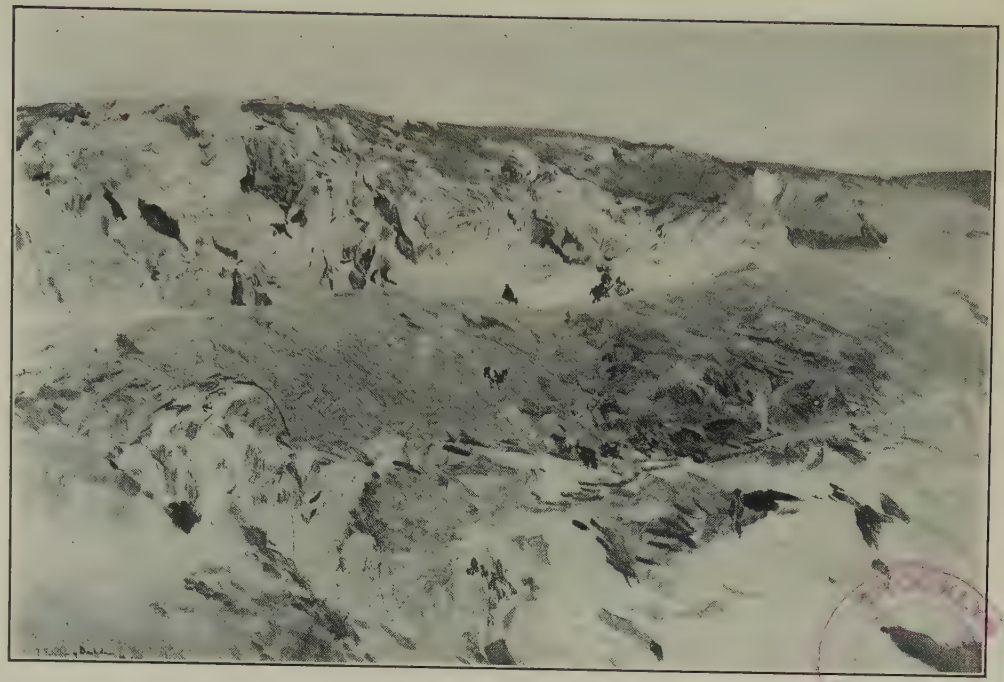
trait à même de les admirer tous sans nous entre-battre. M. Sorolla est un grand peintre, parce qu'il sait admirablement représenter les choses visibles. Et il ne les représente pas avec une minutie patiente et médiocre, uniquement soucieuse de reproduire, sans quoi il ne serait qu'un grand photographe en couleurs. Il est un grand peintre et un artiste (ce terme ne comporte ni grandeur ni restriction, on est dedans l'art, ou en dehors) parce qu'il choisit, parce qu'il synthétise, parce qu'il accentue le caractère d'un être ou d'un site, parce qu'il saisit la composition dans la nature s'il ne compose pas d'après elle, parce qu'enfin il montre partout que le but de la peinture n'est pas de reproduire un spectacle, mais d'en restituer l'âme et d'y trouver le motif d'un poème de formes et de couleurs.

Cela, M. Sorolla le fait toujours. Ses petites études le prouvent autant que ses toiles spacieuses. Ces études étaient, à son exposition, pendues par grappes innombrables : c'étaient, si je puis dire, autant de fleurs et de fruits. Toutes étaient admirables par l'éclat et la richesse de la matière, émaux, gemmes, orfèvreries, par la composition et le groupement, par l'adroite séduction de la mise en place, par l'aération et le jeu des reflets. Il y en avait de grises qui faisaient penser à Whistler, de rutilantes qui évoquaient



41

Rocas, Jávea



Camino de los Alijares, Toledo

Monticelli, de sombres qui appelaient le souvenir de Jongkind, d'intimes qui s'apparentaient à Hervier et à Cals, de luxueuses devant lesquelles on songeait à Fortuny : il y en avait bien plus encore qui ne faisaient penser qu'à M. Sorolla lui-même, et qui enfermaient dans leurs quelques centimètres carrés toute la brise marine, toute la fuyante magie de la Méditerranée, avec un brio, une science, une ardeur, une souplesse, une virtuosité des valeurs qui ravissaient les yeux et l'esprit. Mainte de ces études minuscules valait une grande toile par la force de la synthèse.

Parallèle aux impressionnistes français, mais les connaissant peu, restant très libre de leur influence, ne prenant conseil que du plein air et décidé à conserver au dessin toute son importance, ayant un grand besoin, tout latin, d'harmonie, d'équilibre, de composition, de dessous solides aux plus vives fantaisies chromatiques, parti de l'art du portraitiste scolastique, affranchi lentement de ce détestable académisme et de cette peinture d'histoire qui, en ces cinquante dernières années, paralysèrent l'art espagnol, M. Sorolla s'est trouvé avoisiner certains de nos maîtres tout simplement parce qu'il faisait de son côté ce qu'eux faisaient du leur : il désavouait les recettes et s'installait en pleine nature. La richesse de sa vision l'a mené, de concert avec la richesse du ciel natal, à des

hardiesses aussi fastueuses que celles de nos impressionnistes, mais sa technique est restée indépendante de la leur. Il joue des valeurs sans diviser le ton, il pose sa touche pure et une fois pour toutes, mais il ne la fragmente pas, et trouve l'éclat par un usage tout classique des rapports. L'étude des reflets l'a tenté, comme Besnard, et certaines têtes entre deux lumières, certains arrangements de tableaux restreints peuplés de petites figures, certaines féeries de bleu, de jaune, dans les contre-jours, ont suffi à amener chez quelques visiteurs une comparaison. Elle ne s'applique, pour quiconque réfléchit, qu'au commun amour des jeux du prisme qu'on trouve en ces deux grands virtuoses. Le *don* les honore et les assimile ; il n'y a rien de sérieusement soutenable dans l'affirmation de leur ressemblance. Les marines de Besnard, et ses figures espagnoles, sont conçues plus décorativement que le réaliste Sorolla n'a conçu les siennes, et s'il y a chez celui-ci une maîtrise égale et peut-être encore plus de variété et de faculté coloriste proprement dite, chez le maître français il y a plus de style, plus de synthèse, plus de rêve, et presque une hallucination à laquelle le virtuose valencien reste étranger. Besnard est hanté de l'étrange, il est raffiné, subtil, capricieux, stylisé, féminin. Rien de tout cela n'existe chez le simple, le direct, le vibrant et le masculin

Familia segoviana

Escaldando uva, Jávea

peintre qu'est M. Sorolla. Leurs portraits suffiraient à montrer l'incompatibilité de leurs tempéraments, de leurs visions, de leurs races : leurs paysages mêmes y suffisent. Seule, une commune faculté de réalisation immédiate et indéfinie apparie ces deux hommes.

Il n'y a chez M. Sorolla d'autre esthétique que celle-ci : obéir à cette faculté merveilleuse, être son instrument docile, laborieux, fidèle et prompt, dès qu'elle veut s'exprimer par la main et le regard de l'homme qu'elle a choisi. Le peintre semble vivre dans un état de permanente et radieuse extériorisation. Cela suffit pour qu'il suggère la joie, et pour que toute son œuvre soit un hymne à la force, à la souplesse, à la grâce animale, dans le travail ou les jeux de ses mariniers, de ses vendangeuses, de ses ouvrières, de ses gamins. Tous vivent dans la fête gratuite de l'eau et de la lumière : leurs faces rient et leurs muscles se tendent. Pas un visage de souci, pas un torse affaissé, pas une ombre de l'âme en ces êtres vibrants parmi les poèmes rutilants, beaux de la beauté païenne, d'un réalisme magnifié par l'ivresse de vivre. Pas de volupté non plus : la joyeuse chasteté, préférant le renforcement des jeux physiques à l'usure de l'amour, conserve, affine et exalte ces corps imprégnés du sel de la mer salubre et cinglés par le vent du large. Une heure passée à épeler une à une

les strophes de ce vaste chant de la santé, et voici qu'on sort plus calme, avec une vision de lumière sur la rétine et dans l'esprit. N'est-ce pas là une façon de mettre, pour M. Sorolla lui aussi, de la psychologie dans la peinture? Auprès de tant de beautés mélancoliques dans l'art moderne, j'avoue mon goût fervent pour cette muse qui dispense l'heureuse scintillation de son allégresse, et qui se lève, nue et odorante du flot, sur une plage blonde, dans la palpitation éperdue des grandes voiles.

Enumérer ces études de reflets, en préciser la description, serait aussi fastidieux que malaisé. Toutes étaient passionnantes, et d'un caractère aigu. Outre l'*Été* et le *Soleil du Soir,* le portrait des deux enfants du peintre, sur une mule harnachée, en plein soleil, la baignade avec canot blanc, un portrait de jeune fille en blanc, une grande esquisse de roses thé, une plage à Valence grouillante de petits personnages, un intérieur de pêcheurs, deux panneaux décoratifs de fillettes et femmes se baignant dans une crique, des marins mettant un canot à flot, deux grandes pêcheuses avec enfants et paniers, des trieuses de raisins, des femmes sur une plage à midi, tout cela pouvait, je crois, être compté au nombre des chefs-d'œuvre de la peinture moderne, sans parler de cinquante études dignes des musées. On peut être tranquille sur le

Joaquín

Elena

sort de l'homme qui a pu signer un tel ensemble. Ce n'est pas un profond, soit, mais c'est un éclatant, et il y a aussi un mystère dans la clarté, une philosophie dans l'évidence, une pensée dans la restitution du vrai. On a écrit de M. Paul Adam: "Il est un spectacle magnifique." Cette phrase peut s'appliquer exactement à M. Sorolla y Bastida. Autrement fort, et d'une force autrement authentique, qu'un virtuose, styliste par la puissance irréfutable d'un coloris brûlant et d'un dessin plein de la plus volontaire synthèse, nombreux, multiforme, assoupli, prestigieux, heureux, léger, ce peintre enivré du monde visible nous a donné ce "spectacle magnifique" qui est, après tout, la raison logique, intime et suprême de la peinture.

El Grutesco, Alcázar, Sevilla

UN ASTRE QUI SE LÈVE

PAR HENRI ROCHEFORT

DANS

L' INTRANSIGEANT de jeudi, 28 juin, 1906.
Directeur: HENRI ROCHEFORT,
Rédaction et Administration: 142, rue Montmartre, Paris (2e Arrond.)

50

Naranjo

UN ASTRE QUI SE LÈVE

UN MAGNIFIQUE peintre est né. Malheureusement, ce n'est pas en France, où l'impressionnisme, qui est le dreyfusisme de l'art, a tué notre peinture avec ses ciels qui ressemblent à des matelas mal cardés, ses arbres en tapisserie et ses portraits où les bouches sont à côté du nez. Eugène Carrière, qui avait eu beaucoup de talent et avait fini par suivre ce courant neurasthénique, me disait un jour non sans orgueil :

"Je suis content. Je m'aperçois que je ne sais plus dessiner."

Celui dont j'ai admiré et dont tous les artistes admirent actuellement, à la galerie Georges Petit, la troublante exposition, est Espagnol. Il avait jusqu'ici exposé avec succès au Salon des Champs-Élysées, mais ses tableaux s'étaient un peu perdus au milieu du déluge de toiles sous lequel l'œil est comme submergé.

La réunion des œuvres de Sorolla y Bastida, chez Georges Petit, est à la fois une révélation et un éblouissement. Jamais un pinceau n'a contenu autant de soleil. Jamais l'ocre et l'argile des rochers ne se sont détachées sur le ciel avec une pareille intensité. Ce n'est pas de l'impressionnisme, mais c'est incroyablement impressionnant.

Et quelle science de composition ! quelle vérité dans les mouvements des personnages ! Quelle poésie dans le rendu de l'atmosphère ! Il y a tel tableau, comme par exemple les deux jeunes filles sur le même cheval, l'une en costume masculin de mozo, l'autre en jupe de manola, devant lequel on a peine à s'empêcher de crier d'émotion. Deux autres fillettes—peut-être les mêmes—se baignent dans l'eau d'une grotte, où filtre et joue la plus étincelante lumière de midi. Une d'elles, vue de dos, au premier plan, est un rêve. Il y a, en outre, dans ces rutilantes compositions une science de modelé tout à fait supérieure. Sorolla a dans les yeux toutes les flammes de l'Orient et, dans la main, toute la sûreté de dessin des maîtres les plus sévères.

Avec une facilité véritablement extraordinaire, il a passé de ce superbe portrait d'un médecin espagnol digne à la fois de Hals et de Vélasquez à un groupe d'enfants barbotant dans la mer, où ils grouillent

52

Viejo pescador valenciano

comme une volée de canards, et l'effet de cette marmaille s'ébattant tous nus sur le sable et dans l'eau est aussi saisissant et aussi juste que celui de la bouche nerveuse et du front méditatif du savant qui voisine avec ce groupe de joyeux bambins.

Car ce peintre, qui est un grand peintre, et qui sera la gloire de son pays, n'obéit à aucune formule et n'a adopté aucun procédé. Il peint avec une égale sincérité tout ce qu'il voit, tantôt un grand mur d'un blanc laiteux et presque aveuglant sur lequel s'inclinent des branches d'oranges; tantôt des marins s'exténuant à ramener leurs barques sur le rivage; tantôt un groupe en grandeur naturelle de quatre petites filles

Les cheveux dans les yeux et riant au travers

comme a écrit Victor Hugo. Cette stupéfiante variété dans le talent, j'ai presque envie de dire le génie, n'est pas un des moindres charmes de ce sensationnel assemblage de merveilles. On reste là dans une espèce d'enchantement.

Nos artistes, dont beaucoup se sont laissé corrompre par le snobisme et qui sacrifient toutes leurs qualités à l'envie d'être "modernes," feraient sagement d'aller passer quelques après-midi à la galerie Georges Petit. Ils y prendraient des leçons de vrai

plein air, de lignes, de couleur, d'empâtement et d'originalité. Je sais bien que pour atteindre à de telles hauteurs, il ne faut pas seulement s'astreindre à un travail incessant et qu'il faut par-dessus tout être doué. Il n'en est pas moins certain que si Sorolla y Bastida met aujourd'hui quelques heures à camper ses modèles, il a dû mettre de longues années à les étudier et à les construire. La vue d'un nombre aussi considérable de productions hors ligne donnera probablement à réfléchir à quantité de jeunes familiers du bal des Quat'z'Arts qui ont eu jusqu'ici plus de bérets que de talent.

Ce qui m'a le moins séduit dans cette belle exposition, ce sont deux grands portraits de femmes qui sentent un peu l'Académie et rentrent dans la catégorie des œuvres ordinaires. Il est vrai que rien, pour un peintre, n'est plus ardu que travailler au portrait d'une femme, laquelle ne se trouve jamais ni assez jolie ni assez jeune.

Elle a cinquante-neuf ans. Vous lui donnez les traits et la fraîcheur d'une fille de dix-huit et elle vous dit froidement :

"Oui, certainement, c'est bien moi, mais vous m'avez un peu vieillie."

Barcas de pesca

Puerto de Valencia

THE ART OF JOAQUÍN SOROLLA

BY LEONARD WILLIAMS

IN THE

CATALOGUE OF PAINTINGS by Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida exhibited by the Hispanic Society of America, February 8 to March 8, 1909. With introduction by Leonard Williams.

55

El beso

THE ART OF JOAQUÍN SOROLLA

I

BIOGRAPHICAL

JOAQUÍN SOROLLA, the son of humble parents, was born at Valencia, Spain, on February 27, 1863. Two years later, the cholera epidemic which was raging in that city carried off both his father and his mother, and the orphan, together with his infant sister, was adopted by his aunt upon the mother's side, Doña Isabel Bastida, and her husband, Don José Piqueres.

When Joaquín was of an age to go to school, he manifested little inclination for his studies proper, though he revealed a stealthy and incorrigible craze for scrawling embryonic drawings in his copy-books, until, impressed by the precocious merit and persistence of this extra-pedagogic labor, one of his masters was intelligent enough to overlook his inattention

to the tasks appointed him, and even made him surreptitious presents of material for the prosecution of his hobby.

In course of time, since young Sorolla made no visible progress at his lessons, his uncle, who was by trade a locksmith, removed the boy from school and placed him in his workshop, while yet allowing him to attend some drawing-classes, held at a local school for artisans; and here his resolution and his talent swept off all the prizes; so that, on reaching fifteen years, he was permitted to renounce the locksmith's shop and finally devote himself to studying art.

He now became a student of the Academia de Bellas Artes of San Carlos, which is also at Valencia, and won, almost immediately, the triple prize for coloring, drawing from the model, and perspective. About this time, too, he received assistance from a philanthropic gentleman named García (whose daughter, Doña Clotilde, he subsequently married), and so was able to remain for several years at the academy. During these years he visited Madrid on three occasions, and exhibited, first of all, three paintings which aroused no curiosity, and afterward his earliest important work, namely, a canvas of large dimensions titled "The Second of May." The second visit to the Spanish capital was longer than

Bao de la Reinà, Valsáin

Escalera del Palacio, Granja

the other two, and young Sorolla utilized it to his best advantage by copying the masterpiece of Velázquez and Ribera in the Prado Gallery.

"The Second of May," [1] which represents the desperate resistance of the *Madrileños* to the French invading army, during the Spanish War of Independence, is by no means a flawless work, although the drawing is correct and spirited; nor is it even an unusually precocious effort for a painter who was more than twenty years of age. Yet it contained one striking innovation; for it was painted in the open air, Sorolla choosing for his natural and informal studio the arena of the spacious bull-ring of Valencia, where he enwreathed his models with dense smoke in scrupulous reconstitution of authentic scenes of war.

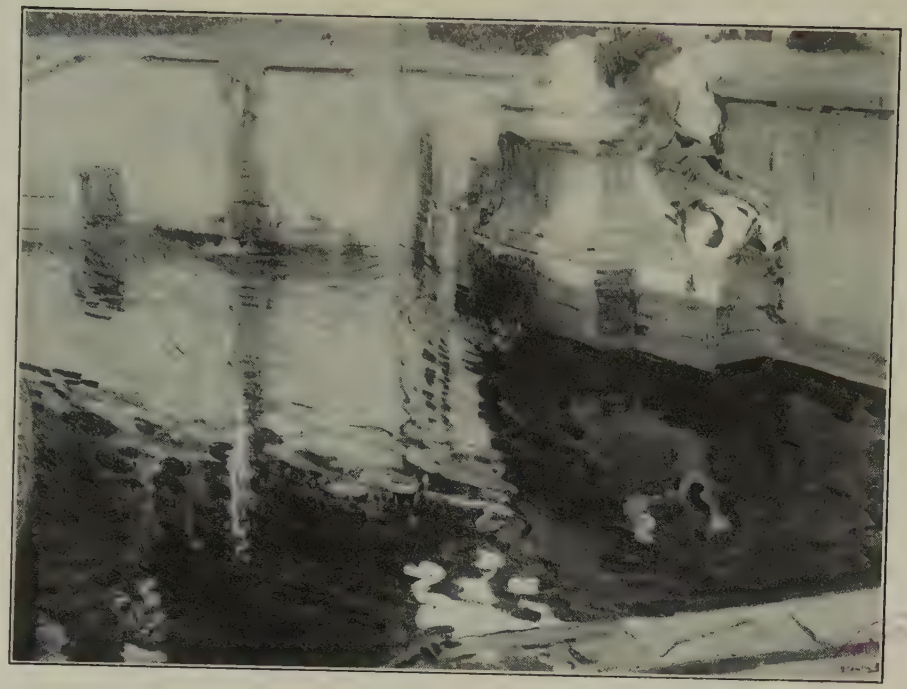
In the same year (1884) another of his paintings won for him the scholarship offered by his native town for studying art in Italy. Accordingly, he repaired to Rome and stayed there for some months, proceeding thence to Paris, and returning not long afterward to the Italian capital. However, at the exhibitions, held in Paris, of the works of Bastien-Lepage and Menzel, "Sorolla's eyes were opened to

[1] This painting is now in the Biblioteca-Museo Balaguer, founded with the expenditure of almost his whole fortune by the eminent Catalan poet, historian, and statesman, Victor Balaguer, at Villanueva y Geltrú, a town in Cataluña.

the revolution which was being effected in the history of modern painting";[1] and even after his return to Italy, this novel and regenerative movement in French art continued to engage his preference. Already, therefore, in the opening stage of his career, the youthful and spontaneous realist of Valencia—the compatriot of Goya and the fellow-citizen of Spagnoletto—was captivated and encouraged by the parallel yet independent realism of a German and a French contemporary.

On his return to Rome, where false and academic methods still pretended to their old supremacy, Sorolla, led by duty rather than by desire, produced a large religious painting titled "The Burial of the Saviour," marked by his wonted excellence of color and of line, but not appreciably inspired by any sentiment of deep devotion. This work, upon its exhibition at Madrid in 1887, attracted some attention, but was not rewarded with a medal. Two other paintings, also shown about this time, disclose the true direction of Sorolla's sympathy. The one, titled *Un Boulevard de Paris,* somewhat impressionistic in the manner of Pissaro, depicts a busy evening scene outside a large café. The other subject is a

[1] "Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida," by Aureliano de Beruete, published in "La Lectura," January, 1901.



Fuente de los Caballos, Granja

sketch of a Parisian girl, treated in the simple, realistic style of Bastien-Lepage, and therefore quite emancipated from the harsh eclecticism of the Roman school.

While visiting Italy for the second time, Sorolla made a longish sojourn at Assisi, copying the old Italian masters, as well as doing original work subtly yet happily associated with the peasant-author of the "Saison d'Octobre." During the next three years he painted, among a number of other works, "A Procession at Burgos in the Sixteenth Century," "After the Bath" (a life-sized female figure standing nude against a background of white marble), and the well-known *Otra Margarita* ("Another Marguerite"). This latter, now at St. Louis in America, represents a girl belonging to the humblest class, who has been guilty of infanticide, and whom the Civil Guard convey as prisoner to receive or to perform her sentence. The scene is a third-class railway-wagon, bare, uncushioned, comfortless—such as is still not obsolete in Spain. The head of this unhappy "Marguerite" is drooping on her breast and, with her blanched, emaciated face and limp, dejected form, denotes the utmost depth of human woe. Her hands are bound, but a fold of her coarse shawl has partly fallen or been drawn across them. A bundle lies beside her on

the seat. Though it is painted out with care, this work has scarcely any scope for detail. Nothing relieves its melancholy bareness save the spots upon the prisoner's cheap print dress, and the pattern on the kerchief which contains her change of clothing.

This pitiful and somber scene is treated with a poignant realism, yet with an equally eloquent restraint. Emotion here is not obtruded, as in the case of mediocre genre: it is not ostentatious, but suggestive. Flawless in technical fidelity, the figure of the girl discloses that her moral weariness has overcome her physical. Her attitude of collapse proceeds, not from a muscular fatigue, as much as from an agony of remorse which has its fountain in her very soul. One of her two custodians marks her with a meditative and compassionate eye, puzzled, it may be, at the vagaries of the law devised by man, and speculating why its undivided wrath must here be visited upon the frail accomplice.

Other important paintings executed by Sorolla at this time are named "The Happy Day," "Kissing the Relic," and "Blessing the Fishing-Boat." The subjects of the latter two are indicated by their titles. A beautiful and touching moment is recorded in "The Happy Day." A little fisher-girl, who has received her first Communion on this "happy morn," kisses,

61

Otoño, Granja

62

Maria pintando, Pardo

on reaching home, the hand of her blind grandfather. The cottage door is open, and the sunlight, streaming through, lavishes its pure caresses on the gossamer clouds of her communion-veil.

In this or the succeeding year, two of Sorolla's paintings were exhibited at the Salon. Their titles are, "The White-Slave Traffic" and "The Fishing-Boat's Return."[1] The former is at present in America; the latter (which has been classified "Hors Concours") was purchased for the Luxembourg.

The subjects of these two great paintings offer an extraordinary contrast. The figures in the first are weary women, huddled together, dozing and lethargic, in a narrow, low-toned, somber railway carriage. But in the other work, the busy characters that plash and plunge about the water's edge respire a very surfeit of vitality; fishers and cattle bringing in the boat, enlivened and illuminated by the glorious sunshine of Valencia.

Between that period and the present day, we are confronted, in Sorolla's art, with marvelous, well-nigh miraculous fecundity and quality, interpreting all aspects and developments of contemporary Spain —portraits of royal personages, nobles, commoners, of the artist's wife and children, of statesmen, novel-

[1] Sorolla's "Beaching the Boat" repeats the same majestic motive on a larger scale.

ists, poets, scientists, or soldiers; landscape and prospects of the naked sea; the bright and tender joys of infant life, the playful scenes of boyhood and of girlhood, sorrows and problems and anxieties of later age, the sordid schemes of evil-doers, the strenuous toilers of the deep, the simple cultivators of the soil, the village cares and pastimes of the peasantry.

Such paintings are (to quote the titles of a very few), "Sewing the Sail,"[1] "The Beach of Valencia," "A Scientific Experiment," "The Raisin-Dressers," "The Wounded Fisherman," "A Sad Inheritance," and "The Bath."

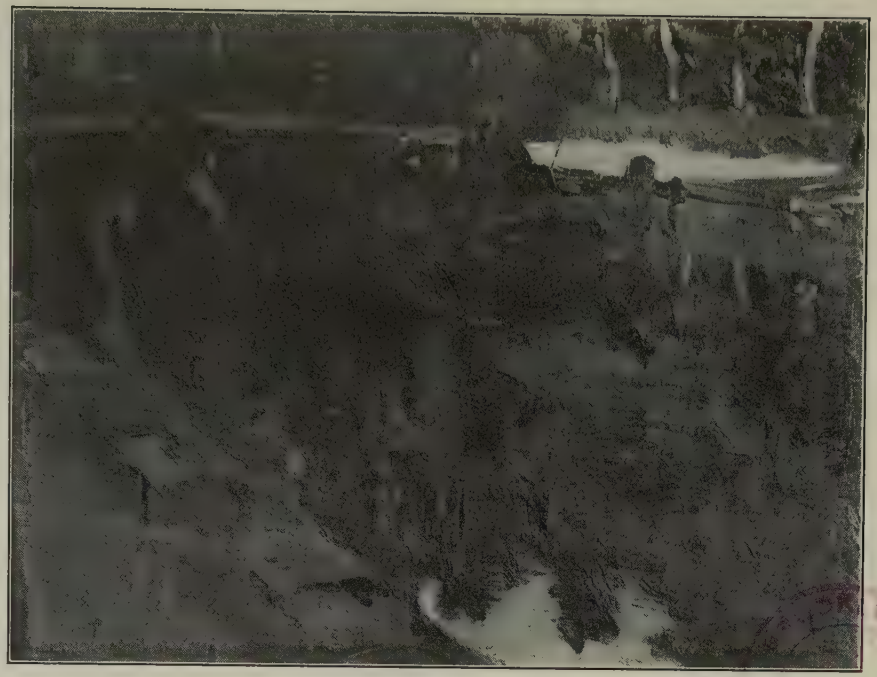
This latter represents the seaside at Valencia, "whose manifold charms this artist renders so felicitously. A woman with her back to us unfolds a sheet, in which she is about to wrap a baby whom another woman holds. The little one is naked, and his limbs are stiffened by the cold sensation of his bath. Behind them is the sea, furrowed by fishing-boats with swollen sails, illuminated by the golden glory of a Spanish summer's morning."[2]

This jocund theme presents a striking contrast

[1] Shown at Madrid, the Salon, Munich (Gold Medal), Vienna (Gold Medal), and the Paris Exhibition, where the artist was awarded the Grand Prix for his *Triste Herencia*. "Sewing the Sail" is now the property of the Venice Corporation.

[2] Beruete, *op. cit.*

Fuente de la Selva, Granja



Fuente de Neptuno, Granja

with "A Sad Inheritance." [1] Here also is the foreshore of Valencia, though it is specked and vivified no longer by those dancing sails and animated figures. An air of sudden and depressing gloom seems to have overcrept the water and the sunshine. Even so quick are nature's moods to echo back our own. For here are not the vigorous fisher-folk, able to work and strive, able to win their independent bread. Instead of such, we contemplate a score or so of imbecile or crippled boys, the inmates of a house of refuge for the cast-off children of depraved and unknown parents. The stern, robust, and noble figure of a priest, towering above this orphaned and pathetic gathering of frail humanity, extends a shielding arm over some two or three. Weighed down by helplessness and shame, these joyless creatures are not scurrying through the sand, or blithely plashing in the breakers. The gaiety of healthy boyhood is denied to them. Their drooping attitudes are inert, morose, and plaintive, while, as it were infected by the agony and pity of it all, the color of the sea is leaden, and the sun throws out no cheerful and invigorating radiance, but is merely sultry.

[1] This picture, which hung in the Sunday-school room of the Church of the Ascension, Fifth Avenue and Tenth Street, New York City, was kindly lent to the Hispanic Society of America for exhibition, as illustrating a distinct type of mastery, by the courtesy of its owner, John E. Berwind, Esq., and of the Rector, the Rev. Percy Stickney Grant.

II

CRITICAL

THE march of art in modern Spain has coincided with her evolution generally. When, in the eighteenth century, the French or Bourbon kings were settled on the throne of Spain, the very life-breath of this nation emanated from Versailles; so that, in order to respire at all, the luckless Spaniards were compelled to simulate a sympathy with, and ape the manners of, a race whose character is radically different from their own. Even their literature declined into a tawdry imitation of the French, replacing natural and sparkling gems by dull and worthless paste; the typical, vital, and inimitable picaresque by nerveless and ephemeral travesties of Gallic forms and Gallic modes of feeling. Nor did the Spanish painters seek a less humiliating destiny. Born in a shallow, pleasure-loving, empty-headed, empty-hearted age, themselves devoid of natural ability, unstimulated by the spur of popular approval, of veracious and ennobling art, they made no effort

Huerto de naranjos, Valencia

to shake off the cold, unedifying tutelage of Amiconi, Giaquinto, Mengs, and other leaders of the stilted academic school which in those days was tyrannizing over Europe.

Such, of the so-called painters of that lamentable and degenerate time, were Ferro, and González Velázquez, Bayeu, Castillo, and Maella—names that have nearly perished with the mediocrities who bore them. Excepting one alone, the rest of Spanish artists were no better. For in this sterile wilderness of weeds, one flower sprang up unchoked and reached its plenitude of beauty and maturity; one bright though solitary beacon cast its cheering glow across these gloomy decades of frivolity, corruption, and routine.

Francisco Goya is the second in importance of all Spanish painters. His life and work alike require to be summed up in contradictory and complex terms. Sprung from the humblest class, the son of simple tillers of the soil,[1] he grew to be a courtier and the pampered confidant of princes; and yet he never weeded out the primitive rudeness from his peasant temper. A coarse, uneducated man, his character, though greatly resolute in certain crises, was swayed

[1] Goya was born on March 30 or 31, 1746, at Fuendetodos, a wretched village in a sparsely populated part of Aragon.

alternately by generous and by ignoble feeling. His sense of humor was inherently profound; but it obtained together with a rooted disbelief in human good, so that a mingled and discordant bitterness attends his very laughter. This taint of pessimism caused him to bestow his preferential notice on the uglier side of life—its elements of cowardice or fanaticism, of avarice, hypocrisy, or sensuality—and hence his characters, though admirably truthful in the main, seldom excite our pleasurable interest. Although at heart a democrat and revolutionary, and an unaffected hater of oppression and oppressive institutions, such as the army, church, and aristocracy of Spain while these were influenced by the earlier Bourbons, he was, notwithstanding, from time to time, himself a sycophant or tyrant. His sturdy self-reliance frequently assumed the form of arrant and offensive selfishness. His intimacy with the elevated classes wrought him chiefly harm. Viewing their vices with a thinly veiled contempt, he lacked the moral stamina to guard himself from their good-nature and complete his life-work unsupported by their patronage. His correspondence, written in a tumid, egotistic style, confirms his greed of money and of fame; which greed, although his art is Spanish to the core, seduced his private conduct from

Esperando la pesca, Valencia

Recogiendo la vela. Valencia

the patriotic path, and caused him to accept, with unbecoming haste, a salaried yet opprobrious commission from the French usurper.[1]

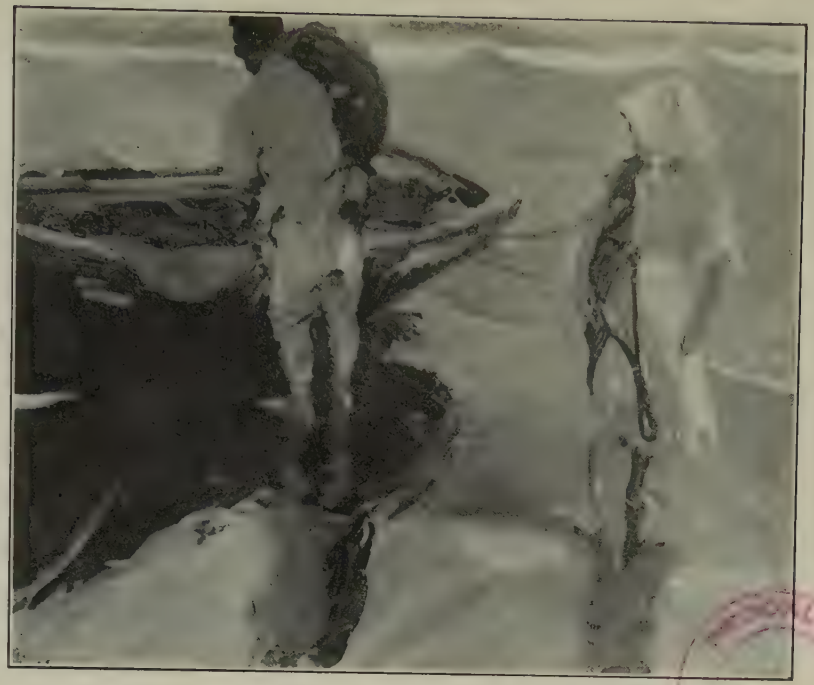
His work embraces every class of subject—portraiture and genre, pure landscape, mistitled renderings of biblical history,[2] popular and rustic scenes, with or without a landscape setting, studies and sketches in the *picaresco* mood, uniting sarcasm with drollery. We note in him, as Pedro de Madrazo has declared, "the realism of Velázquez, the fantasy of Hogarth, the energy of Rembrandt, the delicacy of Titian, Veronese, and Watteau." Powerless to create imaginative pictures of the future or the past, he viewed the life about him with an actual, robust regard, focusing his undistracted vision on the present only. His art, while yet conspicuously original, reveals throughout the influence of Velázquez; for though he did not imitate that mighty realist, he learned from him to look at nature with a clear, direct, truth-seeking eye. His love of brilliant colors, finely juxtaposed or blended with consummate taste, seems to have been suggested by Tiepolo; for while

[1] Namely, to choose, in company with the painters Napoli and Maella, the representative collection of old masters which was removed to Paris by Napoleon.

[2] I say mistitled, for all of Goya's so-called mythological or sacred characters are faithful portraits of the people of his time.

the coloring of Velázquez is restrained and sad, Goya's is the very soul of brilliancy. The sitters of Velázquez wear a look of indolence and boredom: Goya's are pulsing with the very *joie de la vie*. His rendering of popular and rustic life has all the honest spontaneity of Teniers. His figures, even when roughly and precipitately drawn, possess immense vitality. His kings and queens, his courtiers and his peasants—all have "business and desire." They move, and breathe, and speak to us. They are our intimates, and manifest their moment and this painter's in the restless and romantic history of Spain; just as the figures of Velázquez manifest their coexistence with the ceremonious Hapsburg dynasty of melancholy, semi-moribund Castile.

Both Goya and Velázquez are supremely representative of Spanish painting in a comprehensive sense, as well as of the social character of Spain precisely as it coincided with their several lives and life-work. Each of these two great masters has immortalized the Spanish century which was his own, and further, each was constitutionally suited to his native century. For the high-born painter of the two was the child of an aristocratic age, and the low-born painter was the child of a plebeian—or (if I may coin the word) plebeianized age. This happy fact



Regreso de la pesca, Valencia

Pescadores de quisquillas, Valencia

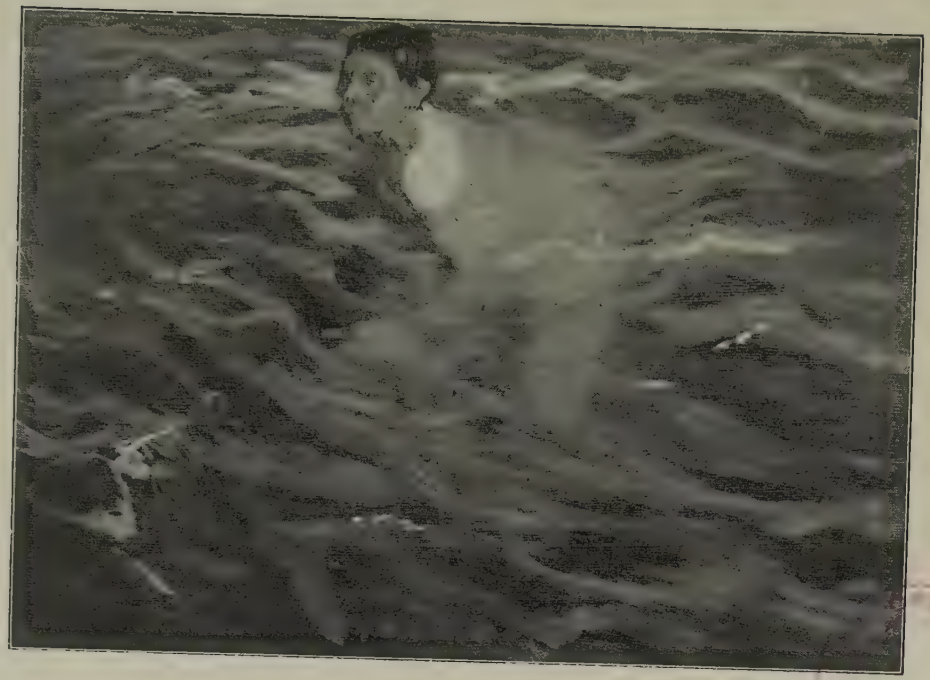
has caused them to bequeath to us the absolute historic truth; for Spain beneath the Hapsburg rule was eminently jealous and observant of her Visigothic and blue-blooded origin, and Spain beneath the rule of the Bourbons was eminently *parvenu* and vulgar. It has been truthfully remarked that something of the aristocrat breathes in the lowliest sitters of Velázquez. Conversely, something of the ignobly born breathes in the most exalted sitters of Goya.

In these consecutive yet eminently different periods in the history of the Peninsula, we note a century of native and ancestral haughtiness and *hidalguía,* followed by a century of enervating foppery introduced from France. During the centuries of Hapsburg rule, it was regarded as a deep disgrace for even the humble classes to pursue a trade, and nearly all the trades in the Peninsula were exercised by foreigners, who consumed her energies just as the foreigner is consuming British energies to-day.

Goya died and was buried at Bordeaux in 1828. He left no pupils worthy to be thus denominated; so that his influence, though destined to develop more and more as time rolled on, has only operated at a lengthy distance from his death. The cause of this was simple. Spain, in the opening quarter of the nineteenth century, was too distracted by internal

strife, as well as by the foreigner's tempestuous invasion of her soil, to turn her troubled eyes to art. When she recovered from the nightmare grasp of those calamities, she found herself the child of other times and other tendencies. A second period of French influence—that of David and his pompous sect—had now succeeded to the cold academism of the previous century. This newer influence, conveyed across the Pyrenees by Juan Ribera, José Aparicio, and José de Madrazo—three Spanish painters whose inborn ability was spoiled by their Parisian training—was but a borrowed and reflected light at best, and rapidly flickered out in Spain, just as the parent light had flickered out in France.

The romantic movement crossed the Spanish frontier toward the year 1835; yet its effect was unregenerative here, because, as I have shown, it sprang from a factitious and delusive origin. Among the ardent and impressionable sons of Spain who gave their unconditional allegiance to this movement, were three unquestionably gifted poets—Zorrilla, Espronceda, and the Duke of Rivas; but since the talent and enthusiasm of her painters were by no means so pronounced, it acted on these latter far less powerfully. It has even been said that art in the Peninsula remained entirely unaffected by the French Roman-



71

Nadador. Jávea

72

Elena entre rosas

tic School, much of whose influence is, however, noticeable in the work of Ferrant, Elbo, Esquivel, Tejeo, Jenaro Pérez Villaamil, and Gutiérrez de la Vega.

These men were very mediocre artists, but one of them, Jenaro Pérez Villaamil, possessed a comical and striking personality. He styled himself a landscape-painter, and professed to teach this subject at the National Academy of Art. Nevertheless, as Martín Rico tells us in his entertaining Memoir, the members of Jenaro's class were not allowed on any terms to stray into the open air. Each of them was immured within a small and feebly lighted room, together with his requisite materials and a pile of lithograph reproductions of the old Dutch masters. From these the student picked a fragment here and there, combined these elements as best he could into the semblance of a drawing, applied a coat or two of color, and handed in the whole concoction as a natural and harmonious landscape.

The methods of Jenaro Pérez Villaamil himself were no less singular. He seldom uttered any criticism to his flock, but sometimes took a brush and lighted up their lurid labors by the introduction of a fancy sunset. His own were executed in the following manner: gathering a lump of sepia, indigo,

orange, or some other color, on his palette-knife, he dabbed it on the center of his canvas; and from this blot, says Martín Rico, "there would immediately appear a range of mountains, a cascade, a forest, or a cavern full of brigands. He gave me, I remember, one of these productions. It purported to represent a cross upon a rock, such as is often met with on the roads of Spain, and underneath he placed the sinister description, 'In this spot a man was murdered.' "

A false romanticism of this kind begets a fashion for the futile painting of dead history. Such was the case toward this time in the Peninsula. The principal leader of this movement, which attained its crisis in or about the year 1860, was Federico Madrazo (1815–94), the son of José Madrazo, and influenced, through his father, by the Frenchman David. The young Madrazo's style, while markedly eclectic as a whole, inclined at certain moments to the realism of Velázquez. Had he been born a little later, his work would have endured; but as it was, he and his age alike combined to neutralize each other in the world of art. Their baneful influence was inherently and unavoidably reciprocal.

Madrazo was an indefatigable and self-sacrificing teacher. Among his long array of pupils were Ca-

Idilio

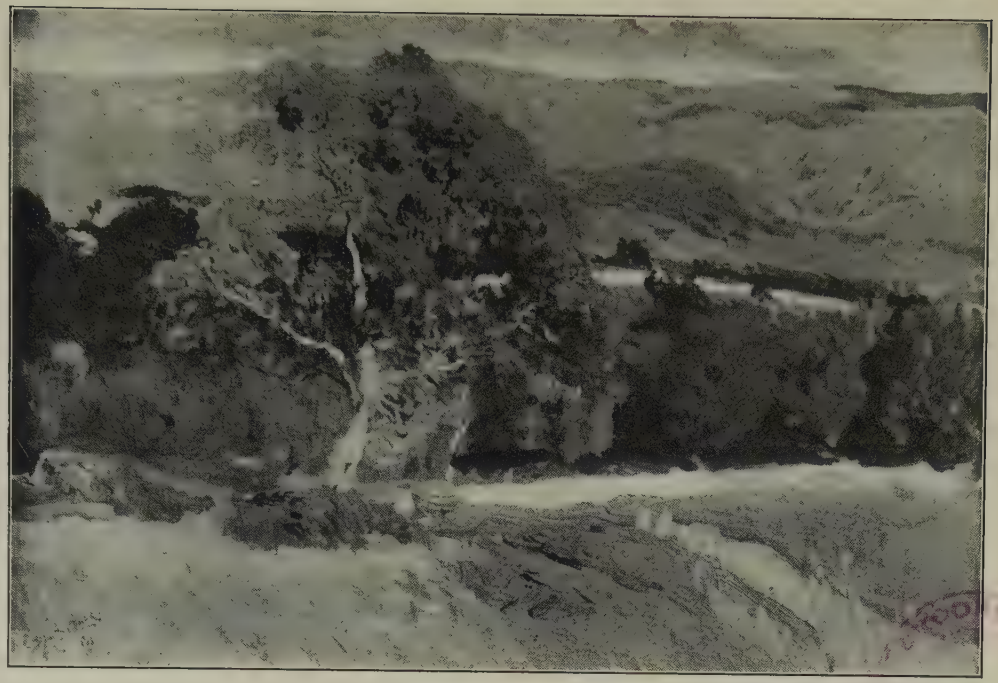
sado del Alisal (1831–86), Rosales (1836–73), and Martín Rico, who, though of an advanced age, is still living. This artist, who departed very widely from the theories and precepts of his master, is celebrated for his rendering of Spanish landscape, such as the snow-clad prospects of the Guadarrama, or romantic nooks and crannies of Castile or Andalusia. "Few painters," says a Spanish critic, "have hitherto expressed with such convincing power the effects of sunlight falling on our gardens or our towers, or on the scutcheons and the window-gratings of our ancient palaces."

Casado was a dexterous painter of bad subjects; that is, of bygone history no longer serviceable to the eye of modern art. His best-known works, such as "The Battle of Bailén," "The Comuneros of Castile," "The Last Moments of King Ferdinand the Summoned," or "The Cortes Taking the Oath at Cádiz," fail to attract us at this day, not from deficient treatment, but because they represent no phase of history painted, as all history must be painted, from the actual and contemporary scene. A similar judgment must be passed upon Rosales, author, among a quantity of other paintings, of "Hamlet and Ophelia," "The Death of Lucretia," "Isabella the Catholic Dictating her Will," and "The Presenting of Don

Juan de Austria to the Emperor Charles the Fifth." Rosales had a fine spontaneous gift for rendering light and shadow in the mass by leaving out unnecessary detail; but he died too early to mature the native talent which endowed him in a generous degree. Had he been spared awhile, the realistic and reactionary movement which was only just beginning at his death, would probably have reclaimed his vision from the vain pursuit of buried and forgotten ages to the profitable contemplation of a living world.[1]

The reaction in favor of realism which began to show itself in Spain precisely at the moment when the painting of dead history was in a manifest decline, was principally due to the tuition and example of one single artist. This was the landscape-painter Charles Haes (1831–98), who, though a Belgian by birth, had made his lifelong residence in the Peninsula. No field could have been better suited to his labor, since the Spaniards heretofore had represented natural scenery so very rarely that prior to the middle of the nineteenth century only four—Mazo, Collantes, Brambilla, and Montalvo—had practised land-

[1] Fortuny does not need to be included with this group of Spanish painters. The character of his art is French, and though he was born in Cataluña, it has been justly said of him that he was "educated outside Spain, lived outside Spain, flourished outside Spain, and died outside Spain."



Árbol amarillo, Granja

El ciego de Toledo

scape-painting as a self-contained and definite branch of art.[1]

The classes of Charles Haes were opened at Madrid in 1856. As in the case of most reformers, the outset of his errand was ungrateful. His pupils, though attracted by his patient courtesy, laughed at his landscapes scrupulously painted from the open air, while they themselves, without a condescending glance at Nature's self, composed, in the kaleidoscopic manner of Pérez Villaamil, "impossible flights of orange-colored scenery, studded with imaginary castles." Yet this was only for a while. Presently

[1] Collantes and Brambilla are of slight account as artists. Bartolomé Montalvo (1769–1846) was not much better. Collantes (1599–1656) was a pupil of Vicente Carducho, and painted figures and still-life, as well as pure landscape.

Juan Bautista Martínez del Mazo, who merits a higher rank among the older Spanish masters than he actually holds, was born at Madrid toward the year 1600, and died in the same city in 1667. He was the favorite and most gifted pupil of Velázquez, whose daughter, Doña Francisca, he married. In addition to his landscapes, which are relieved occasionally by the introduction of animated and attractive groups of figures, he copied Titian and Rubens in so masterly a manner that these copies have often been mistaken for, or wilfully passed off as, the originals.

The Prado Gallery contains Mazo's excellent "View of the City of Saragossa," a work which is enlivened by a multitude of figures sitting or standing, and conversing. Probably some of these were executed or completed by Velázquez, who chanced to visit Saragossa precisely at the time when Mazo was engaged upon the painting.

the manifest sincerity of Haes, together with the no less manifest and truthful power of his doctrine, won over a continually increasing section, both of his pupils and of the wider public. Work of his own, such as the noble prospects of the "Cerro Coronado" and the "Peña de los Enamorados," as well as that of two or three who studied under him, attracted much attention at the series of biennial exhibitions which had recently been organized in the capital of Spain. A genuine and deep-seated sympathy with realism declared itself in every phase of Spanish art. Even the painters of dead history were touched by it, and aimed at better coloring and better composition, or else, more wisely still, forsook their arid ground and struck aside into the fertile fields of portraiture and landscape.

This was about the time when the Pre-Raphaelites in England and the Impressionists in France were almost simultaneously beginning to be known. Happily for Spain, the fallacies of our British Brotherhood were never wafted to her shore. Not so, however, with Impressionism, which has affected Spanish painting in a sensible degree, though somewhat locally. Toward the concluding quarter of the nineteenth century, the influence of the French *plein-airiste* group extended into Cataluña, where the re-

Pescadora con su hijo, Valencia

El baño, Granja

spective styles of Rousseau, Diaz, Millet, Courbet, and Corot were zealously reflected by the painters Baixeras, Planella, Pellicer, Mercadé, Sans, Fabrés, Urgell, and Vayreda.

Nevertheless, this change was eminently for the good of the Peninsula. Hitherto the merest appanage of France, she now regained her own volition, and began to be once more herself. Sorolla, González Bilbao, Rusiñol, Meifren, Mir, and Plá among her painters; Blay, Benlliure, and Querol among her sculptors—these and many others are the virile artist-offspring of a hopeful and rejuvenated Spain, who cleared from before her eyes the mists of antiquated prejudice, and newly looked about her unto life. Not only at Madrid, but in a nucleus of the provinces, and thence, by rapid and successive impulses, throughout the greater portion of the land, such artists, stimulated, like all other classes of the Spaniards, by this fortunate awakening, busied themselves to render in a natural, unidealized, and unacademic form, the manifold customs and emotions of her laborer, artisan, and peasant people. The painters Fierros, Plasencia, Souto, Uria, Silvio Fernández, Pradilla, and Martínez Abades in Galicia and Asturias; Moreno Carbonero, Blanco Coris, Villegas, and García Ramos in Andalusia; Cebrián, Se-

nent, Albert, Mezquita, Leonar, and Amorós in Valencia—deserve the principal credit of this movement. So that, in modern Spanish art, the landscape and the rural or bucolic styles were twin productions of a little later than the middle of the nineteenth century, and were associated by a brotherly intimacy. Part of their character was assimilated from a foreign source. The other part is traceable, through Goya and the general line of Spanish realism, to Velázquez.

Thus there had come to pass, originating, at a lapse of more than half a century, from the blunt, uncompromising realism of Francisco Goya, a vigorous, wide-reaching, and successful agitation to revive the style of rustic genre. Though not the first in literal priority, Sorolla is undoubtedly the first in rank and consequence of the initiators of this movement. His industry endowed their efforts with a vital and enduring force. His genius was the oriflamme that led them on to victory. His art, at once original and national, assisted, by its technical and spiritual grandeur, to remove their need of foreign tutelage, fixing the proper middle-line between the riot of Impressionism and the lethargy of routine, reading the glorious nature-truth for good and all, and manifesting to the world innumerable excel-

Cosiendo la vela, Valencia

Buscando cangrejos, Jávea

lencies of the scenery and customs of contemporary Spain.

Sincerity and actuality and sympathy—here are the qualities which make Sorolla's renderings of Spanish life at once so beautiful and so robust, establishing our belief that not only are they of vital interest now, but of a value which shall palpitate in far futurity. All painting that is truly great depends infallibly upon the interaction of two kinds of power in the artist. The one kind is the moral, intellectual, and emotional power resulting from sincerity and actuality and sympathy: the other is the manual and material power of technique. The power of the heart creates and is created by the power of the hand. Not otherwise have the privileged heart and hand combined to form and animate the art of Joaquín Sorolla.

In the domain of art, sincerity, although related to, is not identical with sympathy. It is a less exalted gift, bearing a close affinity to conscientiousness. Many a painter is sincere, who is not also sympathetic. Even the sincerest seeker after truth may be mistaken in his quest. The form he finds may be conventional, supposititious truth, wearing the guise of truth by some impertinent misnomer. But sympathy points forward to the undivided truth; points to a vital

lencies of the scenery and customs of contemporary Spain.

Sincerity and actuality and sympathy—here are the qualities which make Sorolla's renderings of Spanish life at once so beautiful and so robust, establishing our belief that not only are they of vital interest now, but of a value which shall palpitate in far futurity. All painting that is truly great depends infallibly upon the interaction of two kinds of power in the artist. The one kind is the moral, intellectual, and emotional power resulting from sincerity and actuality and sympathy: the other is the manual and material power of technique. The power of the heart creates and is created by the power of the hand. Not otherwise have the privileged heart and hand combined to form and animate the art of Joaquín Sorolla.

In the domain of art, sincerity, although related to, is not identical with sympathy. It is a less exalted gift, bearing a close affinity to conscientiousness. Many a painter is sincere, who is not also sympathetic. Even the sincerest seeker after truth may be mistaken in his quest. The form he finds may be conventional, supposititious truth, wearing the guise of truth by some impertinent misnomer. But sympathy points forward to the undivided truth; points to a vital

figure, not a shadow; not to artifice, but natural emotion. Duty alone may prompt sincerity, but sympathy in its genuine form is traceable to genius. True sympathy has more prevision than sincerity. Mere sincerity implies dependence on another; but thorough sympathy is strong enough to stand alone. And when, attended by technique and actuality, sincerity and sympathy combine, then the result is not a fractionary, latent, or inactive, but a perfect, potent, and amazingly creative genius.

I copy *in extenso* Ruskin's words on actuality in painting; which words, though undeservedly included with his indefensible defense of the Pre-Raphaelites, are in themselves closely expressive of the truth. "What do you at present *mean,*" he asked, "by historical painting? Nowadays, it means the endeavoring, by the power of imagination, to portray some historical event of past days. But in the middle ages, it meant representing the acts of *their* own days; and that is the only historical painting worth a straw. Of all the wastes of time and sense which modernism has invented—and they are many—none are so ridiculous as this endeavor to represent past history. What do you suppose our descendants will care for our imaginations of the events of former days? Suppose the Greeks, instead of representing

Joaquín y su perro

their own warriors as they fought at Marathon, had left us nothing but their imaginations of Egyptian battles; and suppose the Italians, in like manner, instead of portraits of Can Grande and Dante, or of Leo the Tenth and Raphael, had left us nothing but imaginary portraits of Pericles and Miltiades? What fools we should have thought them! how bitterly we should have been provoked with their folly! And that is precisely what our descendants will feel toward us, so far as our grand historical and classical schools are concerned. What do we care, they will say, what those nineteenth-century people fancied about Greek and Roman history! If they had left us a few plain and rational sculptures and pictures of their own battles, and their own men, in their everyday dress, we should have thanked them. Well, but, you will say, we *have* left them portraits of our great men, and paintings of our great battles. Yes, you have indeed, and that is the only historical painting that you either have, or can have; but you don't *call* that historical painting. . . . As you examine into the career of historical painting, you will be more and more struck with the fact I have this evening stated to you,—that none was ever truly great but that which represented the living forms and daily deeds of the people among whom it arose;—that all precious

historical work records, not the past, but the present."

Spain is above all other lands the land of realists; that is, in art, of painters of the actual. From first to last the life-work of Velázquez, which consists of portraits, landscapes,[1] genre, and renderings of so-called mythological or sacred subjects, is real and therefore actual. It is completely and consistently non-retrospective, non-archaic. All of it is truthfully to be defined as portraiture, using this term, not in the circumscribed and ordinary sense, but as it was pointed out by Bastien-Lepage, who wisely said, "I believe that everything in nature, even a tree, even still-life, should be treated *as a portrait.*" For so it is, a portrait; and all painting is, or should be, portraiture.

Velázquez had no speculation for the past. His eye and genius were in sympathy with his age alone. His only scope was portraiture. His canvases display

[1] The landscapes and the landscape backgrounds of Velázquez are not only sovereign and insuperable in technique, but absolutely sympathetic, actual, and unconventional. Together with a thousand other paintings by the older masters, they constitute a crushing refutation of that "irresponsible and dogmatic" phrase by Ruskin—"None before Turner had lifted the veil from the face of nature; the majesty of the hills and forests had received no interpretation, and the clouds passed unrecorded from the face of the heaven which they adorned, and of the earth to which they ministered."

83

Sobre la arena

to us the manifold component characters of his century. His Christ and his Madonna, his Æsop and Menippus, his Mars, and Mercury, and Vulcan, are simply, and despite their fanciful appellations, Spaniards of his very time; not fictions simulated from past history, but facts proceeding from the native circumstances of his own. His Christ is not heroic and gigantic, in the muscular, mythologizing style of Michaelangelo; not a conventional embodiment of virtue, but the actual figure of a man.

Closely akin to actuality is swiftness. Protracted workmanship in painting violates the triple truth of light and shade and atmosphere. All beings and all things whose aspect, as our vision apprehends them, is effected by the vivifying influence of the sun or moon, change in that aspect from one fraction of each instant to the fraction following. Their constant state is not stagnation but vibration. Their symbol is a point and not a line. Therefore the painter needs to catch their infinite transitions with an infinite rapidity; to render, by the limited means at his command, unlimited variety; and, by accomplishing the maximum of technical exactness with the minimum expenditure of time, by one endeavor to achieve a twofold conquest.

In every artist of true capability, this power of

swiftness was existent at his birth; though further and assiduous discipline alone can strengthen him to seize and to retain those evanescent and elusive semblances in nature. The secret of all realism, all "impressionism" proper, is contained in this—the very same which is unfolded by the early realists in splendid and imperious silence, and subsequently, in a clamorous and ostentatious fashion, by the modern French Impressionists. Sorolla, who proclaims it quietly and nobly in his painting, in our familiar talk assures me that its knowledge beat within him at all moments, just as rhythmical and constant as the beatings of his heart. "It came to me," he says, "together with my earliest sympathy with nature. My studies in the open air cannot admit of lengthy execution. I feel that if I painted slowly, I positively could not paint at all."

All painters who have painted slowly have produced their labor at a sacrifice of atmosphere and natural truth. The finest atmosphere in all the world of painting is the background of the *Las Meninas* of Velázquez, which is reproductive of a natural and accustomed depth of gloom. Examining this background through a lens, we find Velázquez to have moved his brush, charged with thin color, in a swift and spacious sweep. The coating is diaphanous throughout. The very texture of the canvas is not

A la orilla del mar, Valencia

smothered up, but utilized to convey the semblance of tenuity.

Sympathy promotes and regulates the artist's sense of value. Much error has been propagated in this matter of artistic values. "All things," protested Courbet, in reply to certain of his critics, "are of an equal value to the painter." Here lurks a pseudo-truism. All things are not of equal value unto nature's self. This is precisely where the painter must be able to discriminate. In nature and, by consequence, in art, the value of all objects is not constant, but fluctuating; not homogeneous, but diverse. All things, as Ruskin pointed out, are "coexistent and yet separate." No absolute isolation is conceivable in nature. A spear, a plant, a tree, a piece of clothing—any object that you please—has its particular value, and again, that other value which accrues to it from casual or intended circumstances. Its incidental or premeditated neighborhood to other objects modifies these values by contributing to them other and contingent values. These supplementary and complex values, interacting with its very own, affect it as to form and color, history, locality, and even ethics. In "The Surrender of Breda," by Velázquez, the row of lances have their quasi-isolated or particular value, yet affect, and are affected by, the episode of which

they are a factor. They intercept the sky, and influence, and are influenced by, the shades and values of that sky. Again, these formidable weapons of Biscayan ash possess a martial and historic interest. Their shape and length denote a certain moment in the annals of their native country. Who shall in consequence pretend that, as they tremble in the hands of living and victorious soldiery, they have the same significance and value as a row of lances represented all alone?

Sympathy prompts the painter to discern and extricate these values that exist and subexist in nature. While yet his composition as to color, shape, and context must be nature's own, his system must be happily though truthfully selective; must be apposite and opportune, as well as natural. It is by no means unimportant whether his subjects meet our eye in such a disposition or in such another one; whether their moods, as he conveys them to our ken, be regular or fitful, grave or gay, serene or agitated. The robes of cardinals are red; but in one famous portrait such a robe accentuates the *sanguinary* instincts of a certain cardinal whose ferocity upset the peace of nations. That robe contains at once a general and a special symbolism. Its color overspreads the character of the wearer in relation to a certain

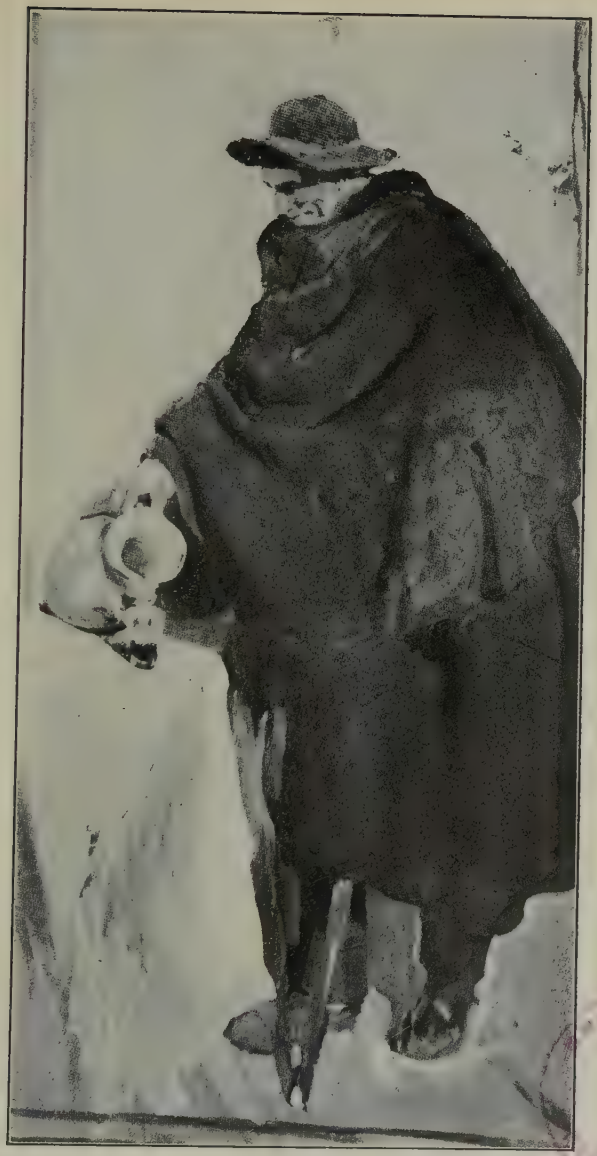
En los jardines de la Granja

phase of history. So, both in nature and in art, the circumstances which invest a person or a thing are often as significant as, or more significant than, that person or that thing considered in a state of quasi-isolation.

Sympathy, which endows our thoughts and actions with a superadded life, also endows the painter's canvas with a superadded vital power. It makes him conscious of the soul, alike of persons and of things, as well as of their outer and apparent form. Unsympathetic painters are precluded from a perfect greatness. For only sympathy is able to perceive the spiritual beauty in its actual and true relation to the carnal. The ugliness or beauty of a human being proceeds, not from the essence or the form alone, but from the subtle interaction of the two. This inner and this outer symmetry or ugliness are never disassociated. The relatively perfect human beauty is the union of both symmetries; the relatively perfect human ugliness, the union of both opposites of symmetry. An outer symmetry may yet accompany a crooked soul, or else, as in the "Portrait of an Old Man with a Bulbous Nose," by Ghirlandajo, a want of outer symmetry may be transfigured by a psychic sweetness—by the spiritual symmetry—into a pleasing semblance that is almost physically beautiful. It was remarked by Bastien-Lepage that "most of Hol-

bein's heads are not beautiful in the plastic sense of the word, but none the less they are singularly interesting. For, underneath their very ugliness and vulgarity, we find the thought and feeling that glorifies everything. The peasant, he, too, has his fashion of being sad or joyous, of feeling and of thinking. It is that particular fashion which we must try to discover. When you have found out and represented *that,* it matters little if your personages have irregular features, clumsy manners, and coarse hands. They cannot fail to be beautiful because they will be living and thinking beings. The patient, conscientious study of nature—that is the only thing worth having."

The love of truth is normally inherent in mankind; but few of us—alas, how very few—are able to distinguish her unaided. For truth is not self-evident, as most of us believe, but complex and recondite. Prejudice and routine have largely veiled her from our eyes. Our vision and our reasoning alike partake of this deficiency. Speaking of painters in particular, "It is most difficult," said Ruskin, "and worthy of the greatest men's greatest effort, to render, as it should be rendered, the simplest of the natural features of the earth." And not alone such features, but everything that is a fact. So that the great historian, poet, novelist, or philosopher in his writings, the great



Viejo castellano

sculptor in his statues, and the great painter in his canvases, make us acquainted with the truth by guiding us into her temple. Their sympathy evokes our own. Their genius wakes and fortifies our dormant sensibility. Chosen high-priests of nature in themselves, their ministry and devotion elevate us also into conscious and devoted worshipers.

In spite of all its faults, this age of ours is predisposed to search whole-heartedly for truth. Yet we are spoiled by one infirmity. Nerves are the cause of nearly all our recent disabilities. Such is our inborn aim, and yet our nerves resist and thwart us in the consummation of this aim. For all our aspirations and investigations after truth, we are a generation that is preyed upon by nervous weakness. As if in our infirm belief we soared too far above the common earth to discipline our earthly constitution, our politics and state-craft, our morals and our acts, are handicapped by neurasthenia. Problems of sovereign issue—such as the social or political relations of the woman to the man, of capital to labor, wealth to poverty, inventive effort to executive, the veto of the state upon intemperance, or ignorance, or sloth—engage and interest us hourly. It is our honest and collective aim to grapple with these arduous and ambitious problems; but then, like the maleficent sprite

escaping from Pandora's fabled casket, the demon of our nerves assails us with invisible shafts and robs us of our victory.

Among the past or present victims of this demon we must count the masters and disciples of Pre-Raphaelitism one and all, and nearly all the French Impressionists. Their nature is not healthy, neither is their painting. "In art," observed the Spaniard Ganivet, "the logical is *always* superior to the allegorical." This truth was veiled from the Pre-Raphaelites. Their view of life was either fanciful and meaningless, or retrospective; and it is obvious that, when we seek to disinter the past, we work with borrowed eyes and ears. "Every great man," said Ruskin, in a lucid and deliberate passage of his writings, "paints what he sees or did see, his greatness being indeed little else than his intense sense of fact." Therefore Pre-Raphaelistic painting has no sense of fact; since, for the sympathetic painter, every fact is of his moment, visible and actual.

A healthy sympathy with art is not to be discovered in our medievalizing Brotherhood, or (in the large majority of cases) in the prestidigitation of impressionizing Frenchmen. Yet good example may create itself out of the ashes of the evil. Painting in England has advanced but lamely from the ruins of Pre-

Hija de pescador. Valencia

Raphaelitism toward a better goal; while, on the other hand, in France, the saner masters of Impressionism —notably Renoir, Pissaro, Sisley, and Degas—have opportunely redirected modern art toward those primitive and reticent "Impressionists" who led their privileged and prolific lives before the troubled days of modern neurasthenia.

No prey to nervous weakness is Sorolla; neither was Bastien-Lepage. There is a splendid sympathy between these two—between the peasant-realist of modern France and the peasant-realist of modern Spain. I make no effort to compare them critically. It is a dangerous and often sterile labor, with respect to art, to pry about in order to determine influences. Influence in art is to a vast extent fortuitous. Few painters can themselves explain its origin. "I have no fixed rules and no particular method," pleaded Jules Bastien-Lepage; "I paint things just as I see them, sometimes in one fashion, sometimes in another, and afterward *I hear people say that they are like Rembrandt or like Clouet.*" Influence in art is conscious, or unconscious, or subconscious. Who shall, in any given case, definitely separate the three? A chance inspection of a print or drawing brought by Fortune's fingers from Japan may have affected the entire work of Whistler, and hence, through Whis-

tler, much, or possibly the whole, of recent art. Strong in the mass, the web of life is spun from infinitely tiny strands. A gradual or abrupt accretion of coincidences is the groundwork of all progress; and what was yesterday an isolated accident, to-day is an absorbing purpose.

And so, to state the simple truth, Joaquín Sorolla and Jules Bastien-Lepage are just two parallel examples of extraordinary peasant-genius. Their early circumstances were the same. We read of Bastien-Lepage, "His parents were poor, and he had to make his own way in the world." Again, "At home or at school, he was always drawing, on the margin of his lesson-books, on the doors and walls." And again, "His native courage and good spirits, together with that invincible tenacity of purpose which was so marked a feature of his character, stood him in good stead, and helped him through the trials and difficulties of the next few years." These very sentences are applicable to Sorolla. Both of these men unite a peasant's vision with immense interpretative genius. They are at once sincere and actual, profoundly sympathetic, mighty masters of technique. Their view is not deflected by the neurasthenia of overculture. They do not strain to found a blatant sect or school, to disinter past mannerisms, to make themselves con-

Mis hijos

spicuous by a novel idiocrasy; but to be Nature's servitors alone, and by this sacrifice to minister to her glory.

They are apart from, and superior to, the modern French "Impressionists." Their art is healthier, more spontaneous, and more earnest. They are the older-fashioned and the purer species of Impressionist—that is, the simple realist. They are a new Teniers, a new Velázquez, a new Goya, a new Constable. They may appear, to the careless critic, to be innovators, but *are* positive descendants and direct continuators of an ancient and illustrious artist-line. And why, apart from by-considerations of technique, have they accomplished so unusual a triumph? To an immense extent, because the soundness of their peasant-nerves does not affect their retina adversely. They do not speculate or worry, but they see. Theirs is the peasant-influence that our modern world of art most needed. They are the very best corrective of our physical and social neurasthenia.

"In order to express," says Beruete, "the subtle yet intense vibrations of the sunlight, Sorolla sometimes uses crisp, small touches of the brush, though not in the extravagant fashion of the French Impressionists. He saw and speedily absorbed all that is healthy in the various phases of Impressionism; and so, in paint-

ing landscape, he banishes from his palette black or blackish, non-transparent colors, such as were formerly in vogue for rendering shadow. But, on the other hand, his canvases contain a great variety of blues and violets balanced and juxtaposed with reds and yellows. These, and the skilful use of white, provide him with a color-scheme of great simplicity, originality, and beauty."

A countryman of the Impressionists confirms this eulogy. Camille Mauclair has stated of Sorolla's painting,—"On y trouve, à l'analyse, des qualités solides, une assise, un savoir, que bien peu d'impressionistes ont pu montrer dans leur art captivant mais vacillant, où la vibration chromatique trop souvent dévore les formes et détruit la stabilité de l'architecture du sol." He also comments on the swiftness of Sorolla's workmanship, of which he says, "L'éclat subit dissimule la longue préparation." *The lifelong preparation.* The truth is better indicated here than in this other sentence: "No great thing was ever done by great effort: a great thing can only be done by a great man, and he does it *without* effort." These latter words by Ruskin point a superficial aspect of the truth. Nothing at all in this world is accomplished without effort; and in proportion as the "thing" is worthy of achievement, so is the effort greater. But,

Baja mar (Elena en Biarritz)

in all cases of consummate art, the *conscious* effort and the *conscious* pains were long precedent and preparatory to the fact, and therefore, when the latter stands before us in a perfect shape, the effort is, or seems to have become, subsensible.

An "infinite power of taking pains," and concentrating their effect in vast achievements which burst forth on our bewildered and delighted gaze as though they were unstudied and spontaneous, occurs but twice or thrice in any century. Nature, as it were, invests these rarely patient and perceptive characters with *her* facility and sureness, *her* puissance and fecundity. Such, as an artist, is Sorolla. His vision and his touch—"une main aussi prompte à peindre que le regard à percevoir"—identify their purpose to convey the pure interpretation of the truth. A spirit of herculean effort is absorbed into his very being, beating so close and constant that it is assimilated with a facile yet emotive spontaneity. "Il peint aussi naturellement qu'il parle, sans même se douter qu'il en puisse être autrement et que le tour de force perpétuel ne soit pas l'habitude de tout peintre." The difficult appears to succumb before the practice of surmounting difficulty. He is unconscious, through association, of the terrors of technique. The world exists for him twice over. He is at once the eye and

hand of Nature, and his own. Although the strife takes place, it seems no longer arduous to strive; and yet infallibly to strive is to obtain.

Therefore no subject that exists in life, or in life's mirror, art, is too ambitious for Sorolla. Like an athlete outstripping every other in a race, he is unfaltering, unflagging, and supreme. He has no false direction to retrace, nothing whatever to unlearn; but has advanced from mastering slighter things to mastering the very greatest. His method is the undisguised and naked truth. Disdaining nugatory pointillism and the petulant *procédé de la tache,* he practises no legerdemain of daubs and dashes. Where color should be applied thinly, he applies it thinly, and where densely, densely; rendering, as it were, the natural technique of nature. What color is in actual life, such is Sorolla's coloring; and history, as she breathes to-day, will call to other generations from his canvas.

Children exulting in their pastime, girls with their skipping-rope, nude boys disporting in the sea, grown people of all ranks and occupations, from kings and queens in palaces to peasants pressing raisins in a shed, nobles and *caballeros* of unfurrowed countenance and creaseless clothing, ragged and rugged fishers, tanned to an equal brownness with their nets, the acts and the

El baño, Jávea

El baño, Jávea

emotions of the coast or countryside, the placid harvest of the fields or perilous harvest of the deep, cattle of majestic stride that beach the boats or pasture in the glebe, subtle effects of air and light, the luminous gleam that filters through a sheet, a parasol, or a sail, the swaying of grass or boughs or draperies in the wind, zephyrs that wanton in a woman's hair or in the plumy foliage, the sprouting or declining leaves, umbrageous depths of forest, the stillness of still water, bellowing breakers, ripples that whisper over and caress the sand—Sorolla's genius has expressed them every one. "All of them pure veracities, therefore immortal." His loving industry confirmed and multiplied that genius. His diligent and loyal servitude to Nature reaped its due reward. Now she has elevated him beside herself, and crowns him with her own felicity.

Pre-Raphaelitism, medievalism, pointillism, chromatism; wilful and capricious lookings back or lookings forward; theory upon theory; fad upon fad—should all these sickly innovations be committed to the tomb, their loss will not affect us vitally. But alas for art when man should finally discard his interest in the life that is around, essential to, and interwoven with himself; when he should finally avert his eyes from fact to superstition; should hold in less than paramount

esteem the shape and soul of men and things, not as they might have been before, or may be after him, but as they bear him company between the actual limits of his birth and death. For this—the earnest, undivided study of his days alone—alone can yield him an approximated knowledge of the perfect truth; a noble privilege in answer to a noble quest; a triumph worthy to be chronicled by Progress on the purest and most lasting table of her golden archives.

Puente de la Selva, Granja

SOROLLA Y BASTIDA

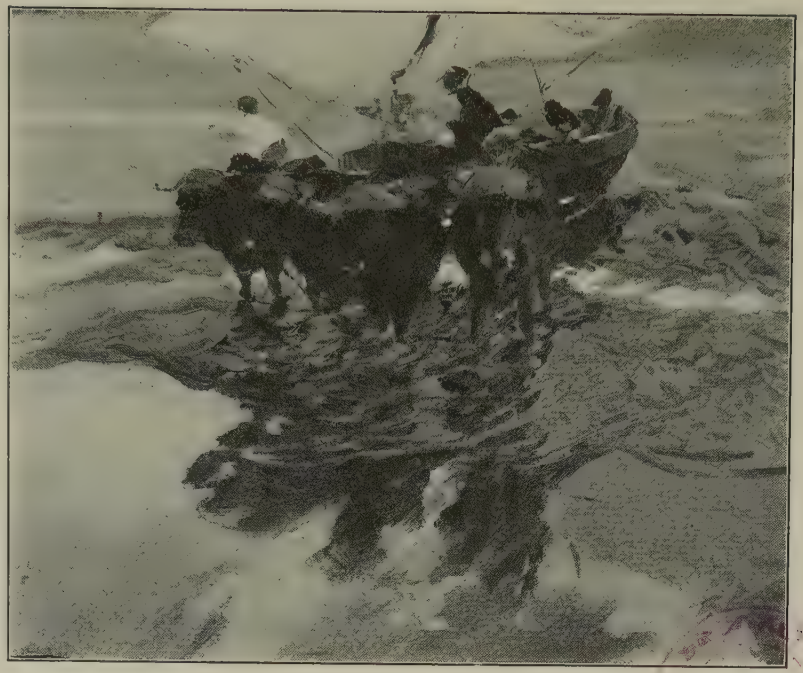
ONE OF THE GREAT MODERN MASTERS

BY ELISABETH LUTHER CARY

IN

THE NEW YORK TIMES, February 14, 1909.

Vista del Palacio. Granja



Vuelta de la pesca, Valencia

SOROLLA Y BASTIDA

ONE OF THE GREAT MODERN MASTERS

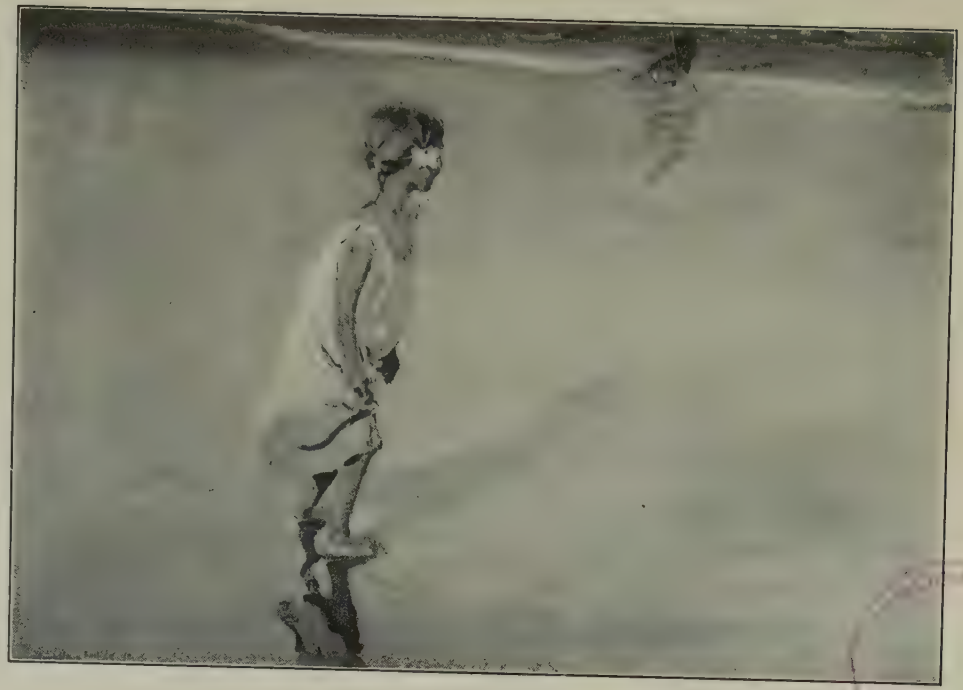
FROM more than 350 paintings by the same artist it is possible to gain a tolerably clear idea of even a complicated inspiration, and it can hardly be said that the inspiration of Señor Sorolla is that. His technique is extremely varied, suiting itself to the most varied subjects, but the singleness of his vision and the integrity of his idea give to his work an unmistakable unity which makes it comparatively a simple matter to define his claim upon our attention and his place among modern masters. Like all painters who have in them the elements of greatness, Señor Sorolla discloses in his work a powerful personality.

To classify him as belonging to the open-air school would be to tell as little as possible about him. This, however, is the most salient characteristic of his work, that which makes the strongest impression upon the merely casual observer. The light that pours over

his figures and bathes them in radiance is the light of the honest sun and not that of the footlights or the skylights. It is, moreover, the sun of an ardent country in which shadows are only a variation of light and light is raised to its highest intensity. Coming from the February landscape of upper Broadway into the beautiful little building harboring these canvases, the furious splendor of the color is almost blinding to northern eyes.

Once accustomed, however, to the brilliancy of the general effect, the observer begins to perceive other qualities which more and more exert themselves—the entire naturalness of the gestures, for example, and the sincerity of the portraiture. In spite of this joyous light and all this joyousness of motion—children running back and forth into the glittering waves, or kicking cheerfully on the sands, men and women using their strength with ease and showing no sign of weariness in their toil—the types are sufficiently grave. Here and there a child is smiling or an old man grins gently over his wine, but the serious aspect of the people to whom this superb color and sunshine is an everyday affair is marked. The Spaniards who pose with their orange baskets and bunches of flowers for the artist "from away" usually are perpetuated as types of irrepressible laughter, and it is interesting to

Al baño, Valencia



Niña con lazo azul, Valencia

note how far from any pose, how far from premeditated glee, Señor Sorolla's Spaniards are.

It is interesting also to observe the definite line that supports the vibration and the intensity of the light. So far from obscuring form, the light in this case is made positively to define it, and the great firm sweeps of the brush across the canvas place before us the solid substance and complicated architecture of the human body with an amazing synthesis that sacrifices not an iota of the character of the subject. We note in the pictures of the young girls in their loose robes how their straight limbs and thin shoulders are seen beneath the billowing folds, and elsewhere, how strongly modeled are the heads of the women under their kerchiefs, how the slim, wet bodies of the wading boys show their bony structure and lean flesh, and the texture of the young skin toughened by exposure.

In one of the many pictures of the Beach at Valencia a group of women are busy with their wash on the sands, behind them the blue sea and boats with bellying sails. The faces and the stout, round arms are painted smoothly, without excess of pigment, and the bright colors of their garments are in striking contrast with their dark skins, beneath which, however, the blood courses so hotly as to show almost pure vermilion where the sun strikes full upon them.

In the foreground one young woman crouches, shielding her eyes from the light with her upraised arm. Her face has delicate curves, her lips are red, and her form is opulent beneath the cotton bodice.

The physical beauty of the type is extreme, but no more stress is laid upon it than upon the rugged physiognomies of the elder women, their masculine muscles and clumsier contours; it is all there as material for art—youth and age, beauty and ugliness, flaming light and blue shadow, the restless ocean and the restless wind. It would be difficult to imagine a greater vitality or wider range of impressions springing naturally from the reality than is given by this canvas.

Another picture that extracts from the subject its every artistic possibility is No. 307, "Beach of Valencia by Morning Light." In this a woman is lifting a child by his arms to plunge him, reluctant, into the water. Other children are looking on laughing a little at the youngster's rebellion. At one side a little boy is capering about in the waves, his sinuous young figure fairly quivering with life. There are more of the white sails describing a noble curve against the deep blue of the sky. The skirts of the woman are tucked about her bare feet, and the big curve of her bent back echoes the line of the sails; the water laps

María en el puerto de Jávea.

Instantanea, Biarritz

and curls on the sand, and in the distance one seems almost to hear its muffled booming roar.

The superb rhythms of line in the water, in the sails, in the draperies, in the flexible figures of the children, the sharpness of the high lights glinting on the wet flesh on the polished bronze, the purity of the juxtaposed colors, combine in an impression of the freshness of the morning, the strength of the breeze, the warmth of the sun, the life-giving atmosphere of the sea.

A more somber picture of the drama of the beach is that which has hung in the Sunday-school room of the Church of the Ascension in this city, and is loaned to the exhibition by its owner, John E. Berwind, Esq. It represents a group of crippled children from some house of charity under the charge of their priest. Most of them are sorry little figures; the painter, however, has not made them altogether creatures of gloom, but with an unflinching devotion to things as they are, has shown some of them in the water, an ocean of singular depth of color, playing not unhappily in the waves near shore, while one very young child stands quite sturdily shutting out the sun from his blinking eyes with his arm, a shadow of the most wonderful transparency covering the lower part of his figure.

In striking contrast to this study in low tones is the "Sea Idyl" in which the brilliant figures of a boy and girl are lying on the sand so close to the water's edge that the waves wash over them. The boy's skin gleams through the wet film just passing across it, and the girl's drenched skirts cling with sharp, chiseled folds to the form beneath like the draperies of some young Greek goddess just risen from the sea. And there is another picture of a girl fastening her simple garment about her while a boy holds up a dazzling white sheet ready to envelop her in it, which has a touch of the idyllic in the grace of the childish figures and the gladness again of the wonderful sunlight.

In the pictures entitled "The Bath, Jávea," Nos. 97 and 98, a group of girls, dainty and graceful, and with the rich coloring of their race, are playing in water of many hues, lashing and foaming against the iridescent surface of wet rocks, jeweled visions not easily to be forgotten. "Water Joy" depicts the gallop of naked boys preparing for their assault against the advancing waves, a picture that made a child of some six or seven years cry out with the glee of recognition when she encountered it in the gallery.

A number of children already have visited the exhibition, putting Señor Sorolla's art to the test of their

Niño entre espumas, Jávea

Jardín del Alcázar, Sevilla

downright observation, and it has been amusing to note how triumphantly it has passed the severe examination, the swimming boys in No. 94 giving extraordinary satisfaction.

There is also another type of beach scene representing the more laborious side of life by the water. A conspicuous example is 318, "Beaching the Boat," in which big oxen are making ready to drag a boat from the water on to the shore. The stout modeling of the animals and the exuberance with which the paint is thrown up against their legs as if it were in truth the spray that it represents, would be notable enough without the crowning beauty of the picture, the swelling white sail that catches and holds the sunshine in a luminous glory.

Although the paintings of beach and ocean show, perhaps, the most fiery spirit, the most of what the French would call "fougue," there are many pictures of street and garden scenes and a few interiors that show no less freshness of vision. In the large canvas, "The People of León," we find ample proof of the artist's power over color. A group of figures is in the narrow street, of which one is a donkey, the friendly, dignified helper of the Spanish peasant. The intelligent beast is decked with salmon-red trappings and has a sumptuous rather than humble appear-

ance. Leaning against him, her folded arms resting confidingly upon his back, is one of the women of the group; another woman is seated on a ledge running along the side of the path, and several men are standing a little in the background.

All the costumes are picturesque in our eyes and full of vivid color, the luminous shadows and wonderful sunshine are there as in the other pictures, and the bright notes of orange, vermilion, salmon, blue, and violet combine in a triumphal chorus. The expressions are natural, casual, knowing, suggestive of ready passions slumbering but lightly behind the rugged, accentuated features. These are the people of Northwest Spain, of a different type from the Valencians of the south.

Then there are the pictures in which flowers play a prominent part, the portrait of "Helen Among Roses" in particular showing the dark girl with dusky hair in shining bands against a nobly formed head, the sunlight and shadow making a flickering pattern over her light dress and lovely arm, standing among a myriad deep crimson blossoms. None of the paintings gives a more poignant sense of the opulent land of the artist's birth.

A very different note is struck in the picture of "The Mother," a woman in bed with her young child.

Camino de adelfas, Valencia

María y su abuela

The olive pallor of the mother and the delicate tone of the white bed linen are contrasted with the ruddy browns of the child's face, but dim grays are the predominating element in the color scheme. Another low-toned canvas is the portrait of Joaquín with his dog, which might almost have been painted by Velázquez, so distinguished is the harmony and so close the values.

It is impossible, however, to describe all the pictures in this collection, as rich in its variety as in its quality. Nor can we give more than a hint of the method, which changes somewhat with each problem attacked. Sometimes the color seems to have been rubbed into a coarse absorbent canvas in such thin condition as to form merely a stain, and the splendid ponderability of the forms is given by the modeling of the outline, helped by high lights justly placed on the salient projections of the anatomy. Such a treatment is seen in 287, the picture of a nude child clinging to his sister.

No one could doubt the sculptured roundness of the little body seen almost in silhouette against the girl's white skirt. Again the paint is applied in thick knobs and violent swirls that lie like twisted ropes on the surface of the canvas, as in "The Bath," "Jávea," and "Beaching the Boat." In one picture, "Segovian Family," painted fifteen years ago, the surface has

almost an enameled finish and the detail is plentiful and quite minutely rendered.

In a few subjects, notably one of two children playing on the sands under a large umbrella, we have not only a quiet brushwork but a serene harmony of pale dull yellows and pale violets in the tawny umbrella, the light straw hats, the wan sands, and the faintly tinted lazy water. In the line throughout may be noted the life-giving movement that is characteristic of Botticelli's line.

Señor Sorolla, Señor Anglada, Señor Zuloaga—these three painters may be said to represent the modern art of Spain so far as foreigners know it. Señor Anglada's slightly cynical research into the mysteries of human nature and his delicately supple observation, his intricate arabesques and scientific execution express both the elegance and the intensity of the Spaniard, together with a poignant though artificial poetry. Señor Zuloaga, more somber than either of his compatriots, will be seen in the galleries of the Hispanic Museum after the present collection is removed, and we shall then have an opportunity to consider his achievements practically as a whole. It is Señor Sorolla's special distinction to embody in his art the franker and more healthful, the gayer and more childlike side of the Spanish character.

III

Malvarrosa, Valencia

Huerta de Valencia

SOROLLA Y BASTIDA

BY JAMES GIBBONS HUNEKER

IN

THE NEW YORK SUN, February 14, 1909.

Jardín del Alcázar, Sevilla

Jardín del Alcázar, Sevilla

SOROLLA Y BASTIDA

WE MIGHT say of the Spanish painter Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida that he was one of those who came into the world with a ray of sunshine in their brains—altering the phrase of Villiers de l'Isle Adam. Señor Sorolla is also one of the half dozen (are there so many?) great living painters. He belongs to the line of Velázquez and Goya, and he seldom recalls either. Under the auspices of the Hispanic Society of America there is now an exhibition of his works, some 350 in all, hung in the museum of the society, West 156th street, near Broadway. The liveliest interest is being manifested by the public and by professional people in this extraordinary display. Those who saw Sorolla's art at the Paris Exposition, 1900, and at the Georges Petit Gallery, Paris, a few years ago need not be reminded of his virile quality and masterly brush work. A year or so ago in describing the pictures at the Wilstach Gallery, West Philadelphia, we praised a Sorolla in that col-

lection, a beach scene, if we mistake not; and some art lovers in this city are aware of his "Sad Inheritance," the property of Mr. John E. Berwind, which has been hung in the Sunday-school room of the Ascension Church, Fifth avenue and Tenth street. It is in the present exhibition and is one of the artist's few pictures in which he feels the *Weltschmerz*. His is a nature bubbling over with health and happiness.

Biographical details concerning Sorolla may be found in the introduction to the illustrated catalogue. He is a Valencian, was born in 1863 of poor parents, and by reason of his native genius and stubborn will power he became what he is—the painter of vibrating sunshine without equal. Let there be no mincing of comparisons in this assertion. Not Turner, not Monet painted so directly blinding shafts of sunlight as has this Spaniard. He is an impressionist, but not of the school of Monet. His manner is his own, cunningly compounded as it is of the proceeds of half a dozen artists. His trip to Rome resulted in nothing but a large eclectic canvas without individuality; what had this pagan in common with saints or sinners! He relates that in Paris Bastien-Lepage and Menzel affected him profoundly. This statement is not to be contradicted; nevertheless Sorolla is the master of those two masters in his proper province of the por-

La Giralda, Sevilla

Palacio de Carlos V. Sevilla

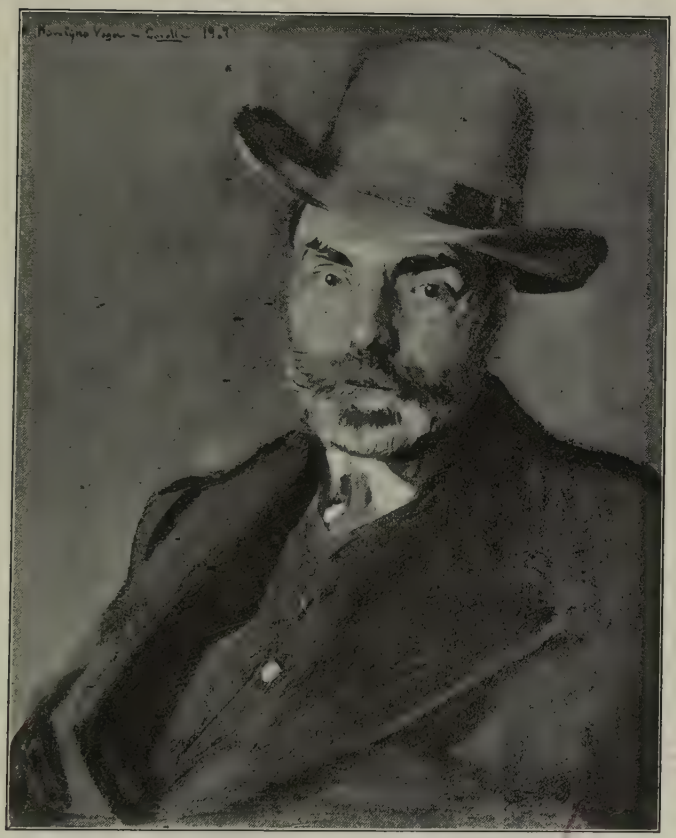
trayal of outdoor life. Degas was too cruel when he called Bastien the "Bouguereau of the modern movement"; Bastien was the superior artist of the pair. Yet there is a touch of truth in the epigram. Bastien academicized Manet and other moderns. He said nothing new. As for Menzel, it would be well here to correct the notion bandied about town that he discovered impressionism before the French. He did not. He went to Paris in 1867. Meissonier at first, and later Courbet, influenced him. His "Rolling Mill" was painted in 1876. It is very Courbet. The Paris Exposition (1867) picture shows the influence of Monet —who was in the Salon of 1864; and Monet was begat by Boudin, who stemmed from Jongkind; and Jongkind studied with Isabey; and they came from Turner, the Sun God, himself. Remember, too, that Corot and Courbet called Eugène Boudin "roi des ciels." Monet not only studied with him but openly admitted that he had learned everything from him, while Boudin humbly remarked that he had but entered the door forced by the Dutchman Jongkind. Doubtless Sorolla found what he was looking for in Bastien, though it would be nearer the truth to say that he studied the Barbizons and impressionists and took what he needed from them all.

We saw his dramatic "Other Marguerite" at the

St. Louis exposition and wonder now at the immense change in the character of his attack. He is a temperament impressionable to the sun, air, trees, children, women, men, cattle, landscapes, the ocean. Such swift, vivid notation of the fluid life about him is rare. It would be photographic were it not the personal memoranda of a selecting eye. It would be transitory impressionism were it not for a hand magical in its manipulation of pigments. Brain and brush collaborate with an instantaneity that does not perplex because the result is so convincing. It is art, it is nature. We do not intend to quote that musty flower of rhetoric which was a favorite with our grandfathers. It was the fashion then to say that Nature—capitalized—took the brush from the hand of the painter, meaning some old duffer who saw varnish instead of clear color, and painted the picture for him. A sweet figure of speech! Sorolla is receptive; he does not attempt to impose upon nature an arbitrary pattern, but he sees nature with his own eyes, modified by the thousand subtle experiences in which he has steeped his brain. He has the tact of omission very well developed. After years of labor he has achieved a personal vision. It is so completely his that to copy it would be to perpetrate a burlesque. He employs the divisional *taches* of Monet, spots,

117

Puerto de Valencia



Marqués de la Vega Ynclán

cross-hatchings, big, saberlike strokes à la John Sargent, indulges in smooth sinuous silhouettes, or huge splotches, refulgent patches, explosions, vibrating surfaces; surfaces that are smooth and oily surfaces, as in his waters, that are exquisitely translucent. You can't pin him down to a particular formula. His technique in other hands would be coarse, crashing, brassy, bald, and too fortissimo. It is not any of these, though it is too often deficient in the finer modulations. He makes one forget this synthetic technique by his *entrain,* sincerity and sympathy with his subject. Apart from his luscious, tropical color he is a sober narrator of facts. Aye, but he is a big chap, this amiable little Valencian with a big heart and a hand that reaches out and grabs down clouds, skies, scoops up the sea, and sets running, wriggling, screaming a joyful band of naked boys and girls over the golden summer sands in a sort of ecstatic symphony of pantheism. Imagine Walt Whitman (omitting the "Children of Adam"), Walt when he evokes a mass of animated youth, and you will faintly gather the rich colored rhythms of Señor Sorolla's pictures.

How does he secure such intensity of pitch in his painting of atmosphere, of sunshine? By a convention, such as the falsification of shadows by rendering them darker than nature made the necessary contrasts

in the old formula. Brightness in clear colored shadows is the keynote of impressionistic open-air effects. Let us quote an eminent authority, W. C. Brownell—"French Art"—who wrote: "Take a landscape with a cloudy sky, which means diffused light in the old sense of the term, and observe the effect upon it of a sudden burst of sunlight. What is the effect where considerable portions of the scene are suddenly thrown into marked shadow, as well as others illuminated with intense light? Is the absolute value of the parts in shadow lowered or raised? Raised, of course, by reflected light. Formerly, to get the contrast between sunlight and shadow in proper scale the painter would have painted the shadows darker than they were before the sun appeared. Relatively they are darker, since their value, though heightened, is raised infinitely less than the parts in sunlight. Absolutely, their value is raised considerably. If, therefore, they are painted lighter than they were before the sun appeared they in themselves seem truer. The part of Monet's pictures that is in shadow is measurably true, far truer than it would have been if painted under the old theory of correspondence, and if it had been unnaturally darkened to express the relation of contrast between shadow and sunlight."

Like Turner Monet forced the color of his shadows,

Puerto de Valencia

PUBLIC LIBRARY

Al agua, Valencia

as Mr. MacColl points out, and like Monet Sorolla forces the color of his shadows—but what a compeller of beautiful shadows—forces the key to the very verge of the luminous abyss. Señor Beruete, the Velázquez expert, truthfully says of Sorolla's method: "His canvases contain a great variety of blues and violets, balanced and juxtaposed with reds and yellows. These, and the skilful use of white, provide him with a color scheme of great simplicity, originality, and beauty." There are no non-transparent shadows, and his handling of blacks reveals a sensitive feeling for values. Consider that black-gowned portrait of his wife. His underlying structural sense is never obscured by his fat, flowing brush.

It must not be supposed that because of Sorolla's enormous *brio* his general way of entrapping nature is brutal. He is masculine and absolutely free from the neurasthenic *morbidezza* of his fellow-countryman Zuloaga. (And far from attaining that painter's inches as a psychologist.) For the delineation of moods nocturnal, of poetic melancholy, of the contemplative aspect of life we must not go to Sorolla. He is not a thinker. He is the painter of bright mornings and brisk salt breezes. He is half Greek. There is Winckelmann's *Heiterkeit,* blitheness, in his groups of romping children, in their unashamed bare

skins and naïve attitudes. Boys on Valencian beaches evidently believe in Adamic undress. Nor do the girls seem to care. Stretched upon his stomach on the beach, a youth, straw-hatted, stares at the spume of the rollers. His companion is not so unconventionally disarrayed, and as she has evidently not eaten of the poisonous apple of wisdom she is free from embarrassment. Balzac's two infants, innocent of their sex, could not be less care-free than the Sorolla children. How tenderly, sensitively, he models the hardly nubile forms of maidens! The movement of their legs as they race the strand, their dash into the water or their nervous pausing at the rim of the wet —here is poetry for you, the poetry of glorious days in youthland. Curiously enough his types are for the most part more international than racial; that is, racial as are Zuloaga's Basque brigands, *manolas,* and gipsies.

But only this? Can't he paint anything but massive oxen wading to their buttocks in the sea; or fisher boats with swelling sails blotting out the horizon; or a girl after a dip standing, as her boyish cavalier covers her with a robe—you see the clear pink flesh through her garb; or vistas of flower gardens with roguish maidens and courtly parks; peasants harvesting, working women sorting raisins; sailors mending

Casa de la Huerta, Valencia

Jardín de la playa, Valencia

nets, boys at rope-making—is all this great art? Where are the polished surfaces of the cultured studio worker; where the bric-à-brac which we inseparably connect with pseudo-Spanish art? You will not find any of them. Sorolla with good red blood in his veins, the blood of a great, misunderstood race, paints what he sees on the top of God's earth. He is not a book but a nature poet; not a virtuoso of the brush but a normal man of genius. He is in love with light, and by his treatment of relative values creates the illusion of sun-flooded landscapes. He does not cry for the "sun," as did Oswald Alving; it comes to him at the beckoning of his brush. His limitations are but the defects of his good qualities. Let us not expect a Zuloaga when we have a Sorolla. Zuloaga comes to us soon; and as Goethe said of Schiller and himself, Germany ought to be proud of two such big fellows. This remark applies to Spain, Sorolla, and Zuloaga as well.

Sorolla is sympathetic. He adores babies and delights in dancing. His babies are irresistible. He can sound the *Mitleid* motive without a suspicion of odious sentimentality. Many of his celebrated dramatic works are in Europe. The "Sad Inheritance," mentioned above, is a mute arraignment of parental sins and negligence. A lot of lame, curved-spined,

pathetic-looking children are bathing. The analysis of anatomical deformities is masterly; and the spirit saddening. The good priest's attitude tells of an existence spent in alleviating the physical ills of his charges. The very sunlight seems pallid, the waters chill, and the flesh tints livid. What charm there is in some of his tiny children as they lean their heads on their mothers! They fear the ocean, yet are fascinated by it. Near by is a mother and child in bed. They sleep. The right hand of the mother stretches, instinctively, toward the infant. It is the sweet, unconscious gesture of millions of mothers. On one finger of the hand there is just a hint of gold from a ring. The values of the white counterpane and the contrast of dark-brown hair on the pillow are truthfully expressed. One mother and babe, all mothers and babes, are in this picture. Turn to that old rascal in a brown cloak, who is about to taste a glass of wine. A snag gleams white in his sly, thirsty mouth. The wine tastes fine, eh! You think of Goya. As for the boys swimming, in the gallery overhead, the sensations of darting and weaving through velvety waters are produced as if by wizardry. Tactile values. But you never think of Sorolla's line, for line, color, idea, actuality are almost perfectly merged. The translucence of this sea in which the boys plash

Huerta de Valencia

Jardin del Alcazar, Sevilla

and plunge is another witness to the verisimilitude of Sorolla's vision. Boecklin's large canvas at the new Pinakothek, Munich, is often cited as a *tour de force* of water painting. We allude to the mermaids and mermen playing in the trough of a greenish sea. It is mere "property" water when compared to Sorolla's closely observed and clearly reproduced waves. Rhythm—that is the prime secret of his tremendous vitality. What an eye-opener for Germany would be the art of this Spaniard! Munich, above all, needs him sadly.

His portraiture, when he is interested in his sitters, is excellent. Beruete is real, so Cossio, the author of the El Greco biography; so the realistic novelist Blanco Ibáñez; but the best, after those of his, Sorolla's, wife and children, is that of Frantzen, a photographer, in the act of squeezing the bulb. It is a frank characterization. The various royalties and high-born persons whose counterfeit presentments are accomplished with such genuine effort are interesting; but the heart is missing. Cleverness there is in the portraits of Alphonse; and his wife's gorgeous costume should be the envy of our fashionable portrait manufacturers. It is under the skies that Sorolla is at ease. Monet, it must not be forgotten, had two years' military service in Morocco; Sorolla has always

lived, saturated himself in the rays of a hot sun and painted beneath the hard blue dome of Spanish skies. What he will make of our crystal clear atmosphere (when it is n't foggy or raining) we are curious to see.

Sorolla is a great painting temperament, and the freshening breezes and sunshine that emanate from his canvases should drive away the odors of the various chemical cook shops which are called studios in our "world of art."

We have spoken before of the large-minded and cultivated spirit of Archer Milton Huntington, who is the projector and patron of the exhibitions at the Hispanic Society museum. Sorolla y Bastida, through the invitation of Mr. Huntington, has made this exhibition, and from March 21 to April 11 we are promised a similar exhibition of Ignacio Zuloaga's paintings.

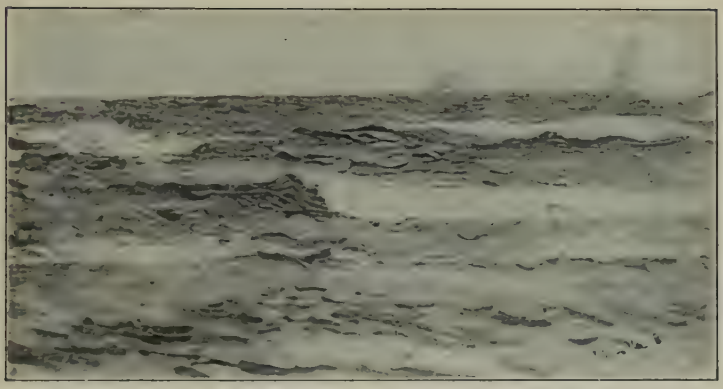
San Sebastián

SOROLLA AT THE HISPANIC SOCIETY

BY CHRISTIAN BRINTON

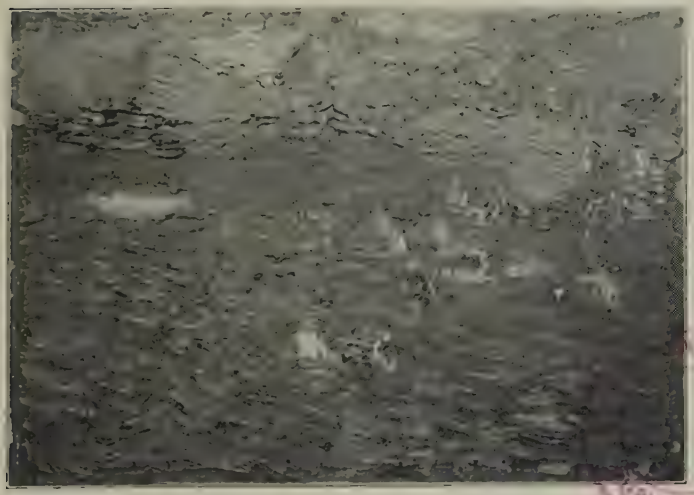
IN

THE INTERNATIONAL STUDIO, March, 1909

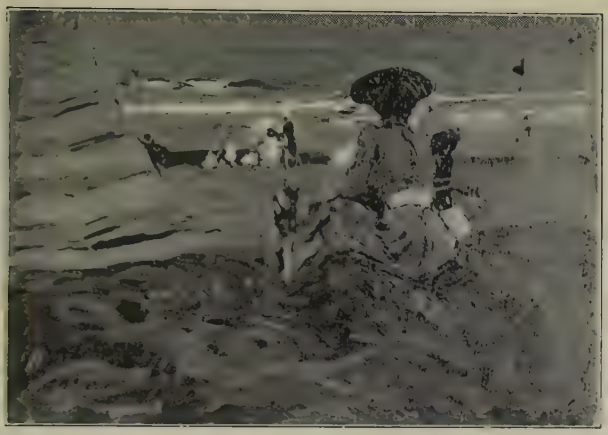


Estudio de oleaje

126 A

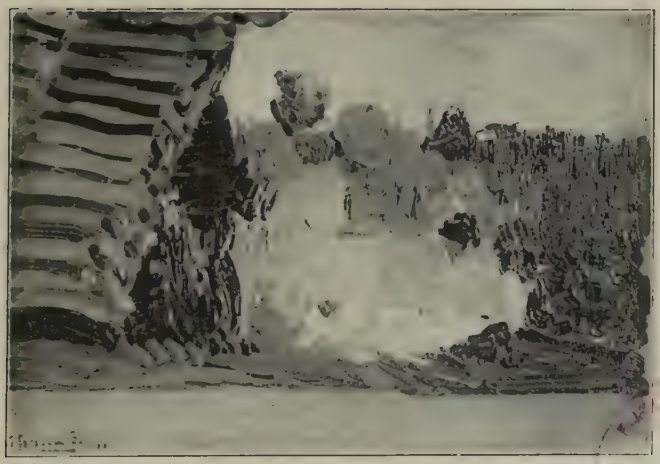


Puerto viejo, Biarritz



Playa de Biarritz

128



Playa de Biarritz

120

SOROLLA
AT THE HISPANIC SOCIETY

NOTHING could be more fitting than that the luminous and stimulating art of Sorolla, which has lately been seen in Paris and London, should make its initial appearance here under the auspices of the Hispanic Society of America. To a far greater extent than is generally recognized pictures require a sympathetic setting, and it is hence only with such a background as the Society naturally affords that the work of Señor Sorolla, which is at once so advanced, so modern, and yet so full of the large simplicity of the past, can rightly be appreciated. Judged by his sheer technical facility, his astounding productivity and the universality of his choice Sorolla is indisputably the foremost living Spanish painter. He clearly stands at the head of that aggressive group of artists who are to-day reviving with such veracity and force the ancient pictorial supremacy of their country. Not only is Sorolla the strongest personality

of his circle, he also, in a sense, symbolizes the entire movement toward vigor and freedom of esthetic expression.

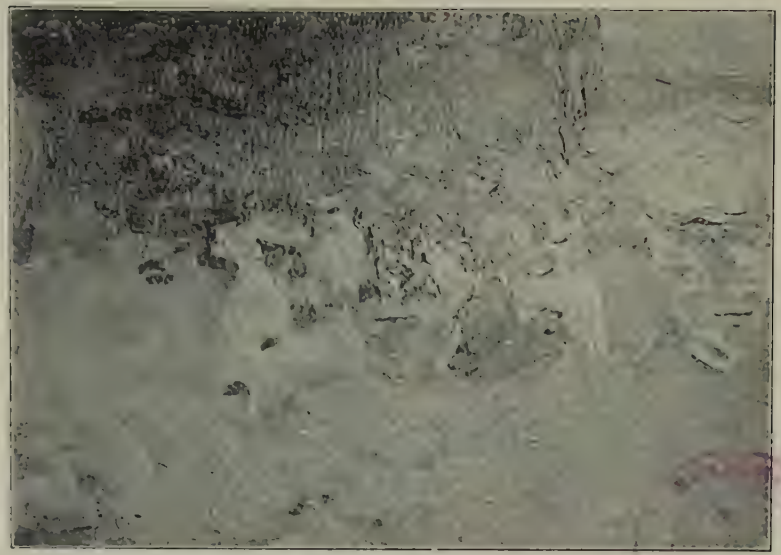
The leaders of this new tendency which is so rapidly and vehemently regenerating contemporary Spanish art are Gonzalo Bilbao y Martinez, Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida, Ignacio Zuloaga, and Hermen Anglada y Camarasa. Slightly younger than Bilbao, and a few years older than Zuloaga and Anglada, Señor Sorolla represents current Peninsular painting at its flood-tide. In common with his colleagues he is a realist, but is far more specific in his versions of reality than are the other men. Sorolla seems to have been one of those positive spirits who are predestined to take a definite view of actuality. The circumstances of his birth and the incidents of his early training were such as to foster a taste for the concrete and the explicit, and never, during years of feverish industry, has he wandered from the sphere of nature and natural phenomena. His themes have been chosen directly from that multiple life which surges about him in all its sparkling vividness of form, color, and movement. Yet there is vastly more to Sorolla's art than its frank worship of objective appearance. He is primarily a painter of light and atmosphere. His work is a joyous hymn to that out-

Playa de Biarritz

130

Playa de Biarritz

131



Playa de Biarritz

door radiance which in his own land suffuses all things with its scintillant glory. Sorolla is by no means the only enthusiastic champion of native character and incident. His subjects are often akin to those of his contemporaries, but it is in his mastery of sunlight that he stands alone and that his art so triumphantly differentiates itself from that of all Spanish painters of his own, or, indeed, of any period.

This fecund and racial genius, who, together with Zuloaga, has opened the eyes of the world to the power of the latter-day Peninsular palette, was born at Valencia of humble parents on February 27, 1863. Left an orphan before reaching the age of three the child was cared for by his maternal aunt, Doña Isabel Bastida, and her husband, Don José Piqueres, a locksmith by trade. As it was not long after entering school that the boy was seen to devote more of his time to indiscriminate sketching than to the actual curriculum his uncle removed him from the classroom and placed him in the locksmith shop as an apprentice. He worked industriously at the forge, studying drawing meanwhile at a local school for artisans, where he carried off every available prize and, in consequence, was permitted, at fifteen, to enter the San Carlos Academy and confine his entire

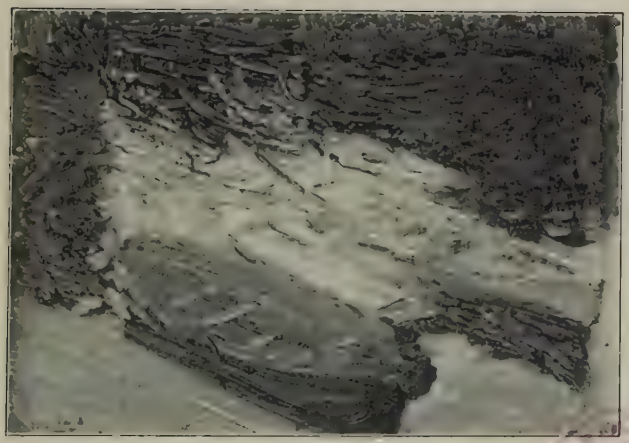
energies to the pursuit of art. The youth's career at the Academia de las Bellas Artes de San Carlos, to give it its full official title, was equally promising. He was the favorite pupil of Señor Estruch, and he furthermore, during this period, had the good fortune to enlist the interest of Don Antonio García, who for some years proved his generous patron and whose daughter, Doña Clotilde, he subsequently married.

Considering the fact that, as far as his own country is concerned, he was a veritable pioneer in his chosen field, the chronology of Señor Sorolla's artistic life cannot fail to be without significance. He passed with rapid, insatiate energy from the glittering exquisiteness or empty academic formalism about him to an alert intensity of perception and rendition which in the end found no theme alien and no problem impossible of solution. In order thoroughly to understand the man and his work it must be recalled that he was not a purely Valencian product, that through his veins coursed the blood of a Catalonese mother and an Aragonese father, and that a wholesome independence both mental and esthetic was thus his birthright. His first appearance in the world of art was made at the local academy in 1880, when he exhibited a few 'prentice studies, but four years later, when he sent to Madrid "The Second of May," his

Playa de Biarritz

Playa de Biarritz

134



Playa de Biarritz

135

career may be said to have begun in all earnestness. The canvas now hangs in the Balaguer Museum at Villaneuva y Geltrú. There is nothing remarkable about it; it is simply one of those ambitious compositions with which such able historiographers as Pradilla, Alisal, and Checa have long made us familiar. It was not, however, the picture proper, but the manner in which the subject was approached, that struck a new and decisive note in the art of its time. Instead of painting from imagination or relying upon preconceptions of the dramatic the youthful realist grouped his models about the dusty bull-ring of Valencia and steeped them in actual smoke in order to get the most natural effect possible. The painstaking efforts of his already famous contemporaries never got beyond the plane of glorified still life; the canvas of Sorolla pulsated with truth, action, and the clarifying thrill of first-hand observation. He had already paid several visits to Madrid, where he studied the works of Velázquez, Ribera, and Goya at the Prado, and the sovereign lessons in reality which they taught him were manfully, if crudely, put to the test of specific practice in a picture whose chief merit is that it was painted boldly in the free, exultant light of day.

The same year Sorolla was fortunate enough to

win in open competition the coveted Prize of Rome, the Provincial Deputation of his native city sending him to the Italian capital, where he joined his countrymen, Pradilla, Villegas, Benlluire and Sala. After a few months' sojourn he, however, set out for France, and it was in Paris, not in the moribund Rome of the middle eighties, that the young Spaniard found legitimate inspiration, and this new source of strength he discovered in the sincere and homely naturalism of Bastien-Lepage. Reinforced by this unlooked-for confirmation of his own inherent leanings, he returned to Rome, and later drifted to Assisi, where he spent his days copying various canvases and communing with the older spirits of Renaissance art. There can be little question that this entire foreign interlude, save the six months in Paris, was so much lost time. The works produced during these infertile and aimless years, such as "The Burial of Christ" and "Father Chofre Protecting a Madman," which is now in the Provincial Hospital at Valencia, are unconvincing and indecisive, and it was not until he returned to Spain and settled once again amid familiar scenes that nature began revealing to the young artist those vivifying secrets which became the soul of all his subsequent effort.

At first he painted mainly water-color sketches and

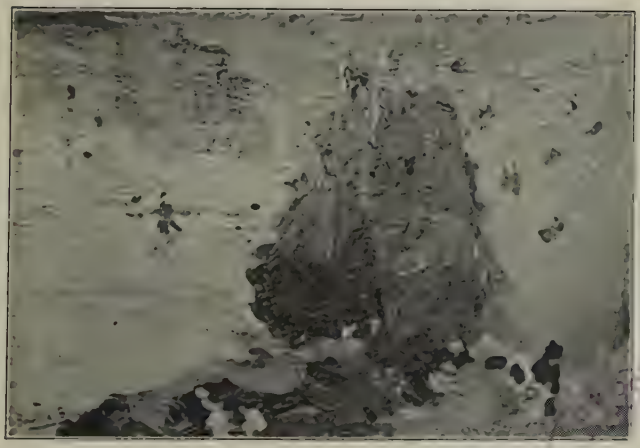
Playa de Biarritz

136

Playa de Biarritz

137

138 Playa de Biarritz



139 Playa de Biarritz

did some illustrating for the papers. "The Boulevard" and "The Procession at Burgos" also date from this period, but they were in no wise typical of his real caliber, which was not, in fact, manifest until he sent to the International Exhibition at Madrid in 1892 his *Otra Margarita*. "Another Marguerite" has since that day touched the hearts of thousands to whom the painter's name, even, has remained unknown. The picture crossed the ocean the following year and was a feature of the Spanish section at the Chicago World's Fair, and at present hangs in the St. Louis Museum. With the success of this sincere and poignant bit of social realism Sorolla seemed, in truth, to find himself. He started upon the forward path with increasing energy and enthusiasm and by 1900 had won the Grand Prix at the Paris Exposition with his *Triste Herencia,* besides exhibiting four other subjects of convincing mastery, including "Sewing the Sail" and "Luncheon on Board." So unremitting was his industry and so great was his innate capacity for work that six years later he was able to show at the Georges Petit Galleries in Paris five hundred finished pictures and studies embracing every conceivable variety of theme. The success of this exhibition was in some measure duplicated last spring in London, when there were placed on view at the

Grafton Galleries two hundred and seventy-eight canvases from the same tireless brush. And, finally, New York is to-day able, through the liberality and enthusiasm of Mr. Archer M. Huntington, to enjoy this art in all its richness, sanity, and spontaneous effulgence, and under conditions that are frankly ideal.

Such are the essential facts of Sorolla's artistic progress; but beneath this bare outline lurks something infinitely more important, and that is the spirit and inner significance of this many-sided activity, the meaning of this splendid and salubrious art, which by its very diversity is apt to disconcert or bewilder the average visitor to the Hispanic Society display. There is, after all, but one way to approach the work of Sorolla, or, as a matter of fact, that of any painter, and that is through the medium of the artist's own national as well as individual esthetic background. The impetuous and indefatigable author of these three hundred and fifty-six canvases which now enliven the walls of the Hispanic Society merely carries onward with the help of the brilliant chromatic palette of to-day the immutable traditions of Spanish art. In common with his great predecessors, who painted with such subdued and restrained gravity of tone, he knows but one lesson and that is the

lesson of actuality. There has never been and there can never be anything speculative or philosophical in the art of the Iberian Peninsula. From Velázquez downward the Spaniards have been a race of pictorial impressionists, and it was to this fountain-head of truth that Edouard Manet and all the later men were obliged to turn when they wished to secure a formula with which to combat the false classicism and flamboyant rhetoric of the midcentury in France. Spanish painting does not express symbols, it records facts. These men are incapable of evolving an elaborate, organic epitome of nature and humanity. Yet they offer, in compensation, the most supple and masterful presentation of the purely objective that the world has thus far seen. The eye, not the mind, is the controlling factor in all this work, little of which seems to lose its inherent freshness and spontaneity. The graphic vitality of Velázquez and Goya is frankly imperishable, and there are few Spanish artists who do not share in some measure the same priceless heritage.

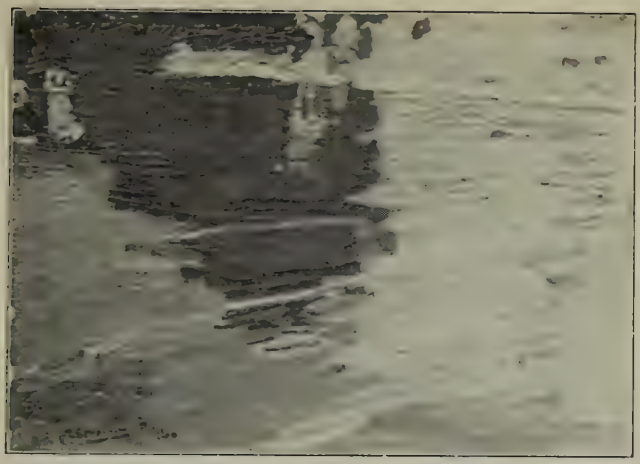
Fulfilling the broad, traditional requirements of Spanish painting in general, yet bathed in the vibrant splendor of the modern palette, the art of Sorolla comes as a distinct revelation to the American public. In technical surety it suggests Zorn, Besnard, or

Sargent, yet none of these men equals the sturdy Valencian in his close contact with reality, in the rapidity of his impressionistic notation, or the magnificent robustness of his outlook. There is in the work of Sorolla none of Zorn's northern sensualism, none of the nervous effeminacy of Besnard, and none of the mundane cynicism of Sargent. Señor Sorolla presents the spectacle, rare indeed in art, of an absolutely sound and perfectly balanced organism. It seems as though there must have drifted across to his own glistening *playas* some of that antique Peloponnesian blitheness of which the world of to-day knows so little. You will find in the earlier work tenderness and humanity; witness "Another Marguerite," "A Wearisome Journey," "A Sad Inheritance," and, above all, that delicate monochrome in gray entitled "Mother," but never, in the later range of this art, do you encounter the slightest hint of morbidity, of bodily deformity, or of soul fatigue. Señor Sorolla has advanced year by year toward a more instinctive choice of subject and a clearer, crisper sense of color. The compositions of former days, while circumstantial and graphic, were more or less studied, and the tones darker and more sharply contrasted, but to-day his arrangements are taken expressly from nature and his harmonies are keyed up to an outdoor bril-

liance which is almost blinding. It is astonishing how Sorolla can secure by simple means such fulfilling results. His palette is a modest one, consisting of but six or seven colors. There is absolutely no blending or overpainting, each tone being placed directly on the canvas with a free, yet efficient finality. The method is impressionistic, but it is not the detached divisionism of the later Frenchmen and Italians; the stroke is singularly liquid and flowing. Sorolla everywhere shows himself a master technician. In his accurate feeling for anatomical form he stands almost alone, and for downright prismatic splendor he has no equal.

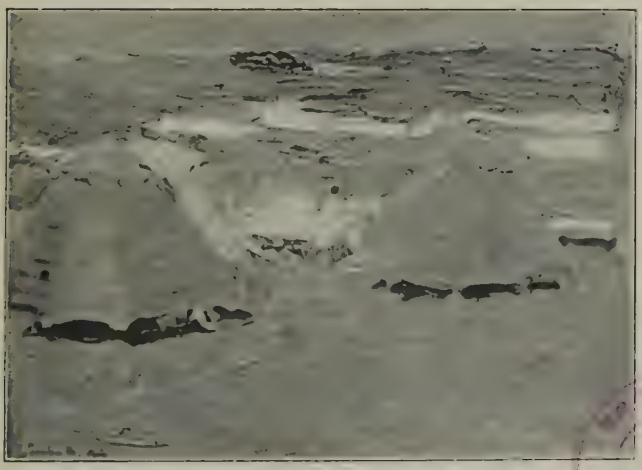
While the subjects this superbly endowed painter chooses cover so wide a field, he loves best of all those which he finds along the gleaming Valencian sea strand where he passes the summer months. It was the Malvarrosa beach which some years since gave him those pitiful waifs who crowd about the dark-robed priest in "A Sad Inheritance," and it is the beach of Jávea, further south, which to-day offers him countless scenes full of ebullient light and color. No phase of this radiant Mediterranean existence has escaped him. Here is the solitary "Mussel Gatherer," there are the "Swimmers" encircled by green, foam-flecked currents; here strong, sunburned fishermen

and great, tawny oxen are majestically "Beaching the Boat," and here, there and everywhere scamper about, amid breeze, sun, and wave, bronze urchins and beautiful, flexible maidens. No shadow falls aslant these happy children and superlatively normal mothers. All is natural and chaste. It is a dazzling panorama of golden sands and emerald or azure sky and water in which humanity plays its instinctive and God-given part. There is in these endlessly diversified episodes no striving after effect, no desire to perpetuate anything save the simple, wholesome facts of life and nature. In these canvases, whether huge finished pictures or hasty sketches, all the world is in holiday mood; work alike for master and for beast of burden has become a pleasure, and pleasure has taken on a pagan joyousness which had long since seemed lost to mankind. When he moves inland and sets up his easel amid Valencian garden, orchard, or vineyard it is the same story. Each theme is depicted with a colorful picturesqueness which is at once free, broad, and intensely local. All is rapid and instantaneous as before. No chance effect, however subtle, eludes his ever-prompt observation. There is no mistaking the girl who is patiently sorting oranges, the women seated in the sunlit doorway mending nets, or, indeed, any of these types which add such



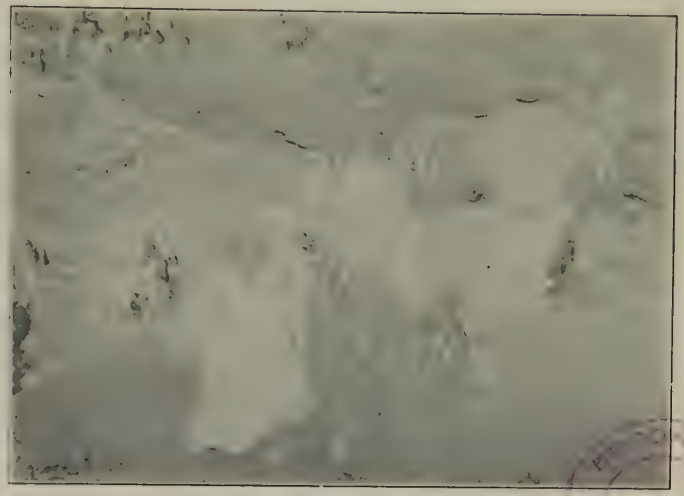
Playa de Biarritz

148



Playa de Biarritz

149

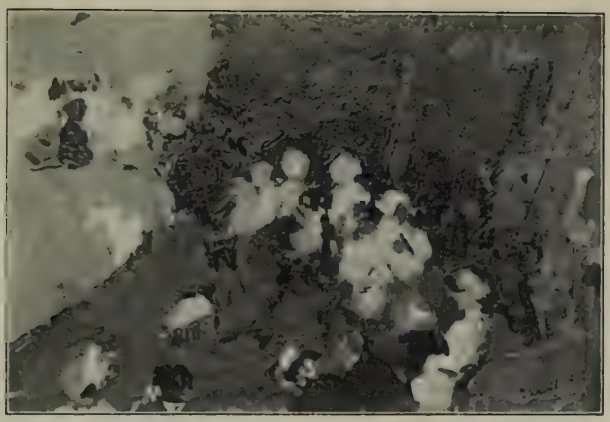


Playa de Biarritz

distinctive notes to Spanish rural life. In "An Old Castilian" and "Leonese Peasants" we have more specific characterization than is customary, yet never is the racial flavor neglected.

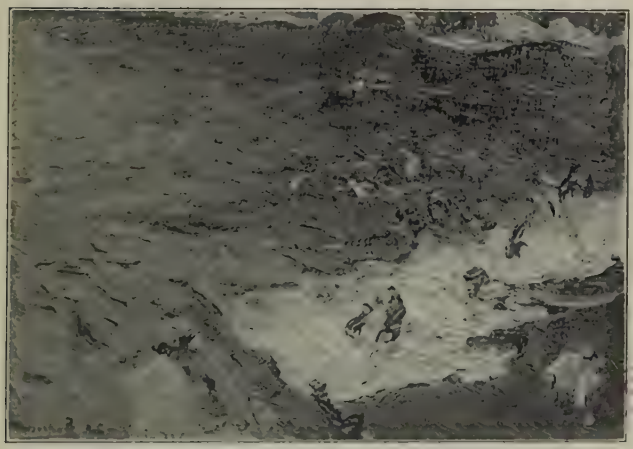
While it is manifest that Señor Sorolla has no peer in his ability to seize the fleeting and momentary effects of sun and shade, to depict a scene in all its transient intimacy—that, in brief, his powers of ready notation are truly phenomenal—it is not so apparent that he is able deliberately to face a sitter and reconstruct upon canvas his inner as well as his outer semblance. There is frank charm to the outdoor likenesses of his wife and children, but, save for the portraits of "Christian Franzen," the Danish photographer, and of the novelist, "Blasco Ibáñez," the majority of these versions of the great scholars, statesmen, and artists of his acquaintance, as well as those of the Spanish royal family, are somewhat lacking in depth and inevitability. None of these faces gazes at you with the spiritual intensity of a Watts, with that mental concentration which Lenbach so trenchantly achieved, or the assertive physical externalism of a Sargent. In Sorolla's case it is purely a question of temperament. He is not contemplative. He does not, in portraiture, patiently await that confiding self-revelation which comes with time alone.

It is unnecessary in the art of Señor Sorolla to seek the profound, the abstract, or the analytical. That which is displayed always and everywhere is, rather, a passionate attachment to outward things. Sorolla lives in a constant state of luminous and impulsive exteriorization. His pictorial language is well-nigh universal, but it is fundamentally a language of visual appearances. He is an observer whose sole instinct is to record with an almost irrepressible automatism that which happens to hold his fancy for the moment. And yet, although these myriad-hued impressions may at first appear wanting in system and relation, there nevertheless runs, at least unconsciously, through the art of Señor Sorolla a unity of feeling and purpose which links together every stroke of that restless and magical brush. Diverse as she may seem, Nature herself is constantly achieving a closer structure and a subtler synthesis of her varied forces, and it is thus with the work of Sorolla, which is Nature's reflex in so far as he can make it. If this art is anything, it is an apotheosis of visible, external beauty. It rises to positively lyrical heights in its worship of solar radiance—it is a jubilant symphony of sunlight.



Playa de Biarritz

151

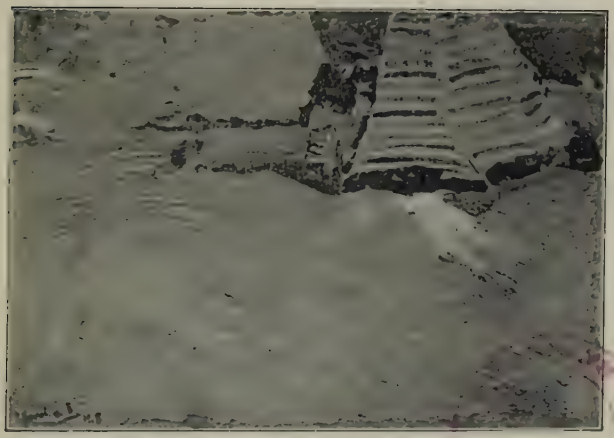


Playa de Biarritz

152

Playa de Biarritz

153



Playa de Biarritz

154

2875 15

BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 4444 05270 8658

DECK 3

COLLECTIONS

This book may be kept 14 days from the last date stamped below.
A fine of 2 cents will be charged for each day the book is kept beyond that time.

24 Ja'38
31 Mr '38
29 Mr'39
MAY 7 1941
DATE DUE
Ja 3 '44
CLC

Form Ds. 100M 1-37 EBB.

B S714 H v.1
Sorolla
Eight essays

BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY
GRAND army PLAZA
BROOKLYN, N. Y.

28 DAY BOOK
NOT RENEWABLE

BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY
34444052708658